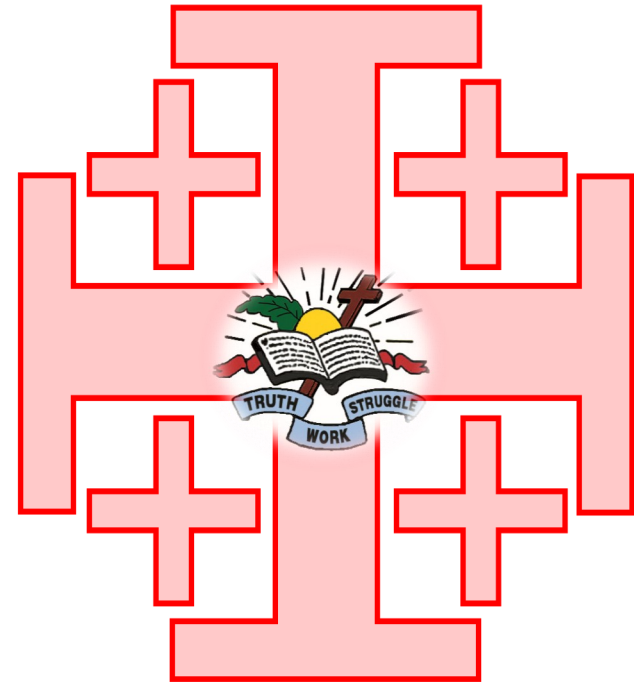


**Now after John the Baptist
was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee,
preaching the Gospel of God and saying:
“The time is fulfilled,
and the Kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe in the Gospel.”**

~Mark 1:14-15

The Season of Pre-Lent:



**A Time of Preparation for
Polish National Catholics**

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"Now is the acceptable time...now is the day of salvation." ~2 Corinthians 6:2

Is it possible for this time, which has come upon us, the time of the Great Lent, to be called pleasant, a time of salvation? It depends on how we understand pleasant life. If we understand life as physical pleasure, sensual, the gratification of needs and desires of the body, the time of Lent will not be pleasant. But if we understand life in the spirit of Christian teaching, as the perfection of self by the overcoming of base motivations, then in this case the time of Lent and those lessons which Lent brings with itself--prayer, the reading of pious works, work dictated by charity--all these characteristics of Lent provide a person with spiritual satisfaction. And for this reason, we call this time of approaching spring a time of rebirth, salvation. But above all, this is a time to straighten out one's affairs with God, the Creator, the Judge, and our Destiny.

In the course of the year, more than one of us in the struggle for existence, in work, in worries swept by fear, passion or inadequately guarding against the drives of the body, has committed a morally wrong act, one unworthy of God. Through this, he has severed the tie with his Creator. This is the time for us to reflect on our relationships with God in this our sinful state.

Remember that sin in: First, forgetting about God and gratitude toward Him. We live in His goodness and love, surrounded by the miracles of His omnipotence. We look at this beautiful earth, at the stars, and all of this does not move us. Worse yet, however, not only are we not moved to love and gratitude, we offend and insult God. If we met a person who offended his father or his mother, would we feel revulsion towards him? But are we any better?

Let us remind ourselves at least what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. The Heavenly Father commands Him to seek each person, and He says: "If your sins be scarlet, they shall be made white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). And if a person, captured by His voice, turns to Him, He is as happy as a shepherd who has found a lost lamb.

Resources

Polish National Catholic Church. "Individual Morning Prayers" and "Individual Evening Prayers." 39-44. In *A Book of Devotions and Prayers*. Scranton: 2010.

Hodur, Bishop Francis. "Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday," "Sexagesima Sunday," "The First Sunday of Lent." 62-67. In *Sermon Outlines and Occasional Speeches 1899-1922*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999.

St. John Chrysostom's "Ninth Homily on Repentance" found at:
earlychurchtexts.com/public/john_chrysostom_homily_ix_on_repentance.htm

Is it not a wonderful and amazing thing? The sacred table is ready, the lamb of God is being slain for you, the priest is giving his all for you, the spiritual fire is blazing forth from the holy table, the Cherubim are standing by, the Seraphim are hovering, the six winged spirits have their faces covered, all the spiritual powers are praying for you along with the priest, the spiritual fire is descending, the blood in the chalice is being poured from Christ's immaculate side for your cleansing. Do you not fear, do you not blush when you are shown up to be a liar at this sacred, awesome hour? There are one hundred and sixty-eight hours in the week and God has set aside just one for Himself. Do you waste this in worldly business, in ridiculous things and everyday affairs? And then with what boldness do you draw near to the mysteries? What kind of polluted conscience do you have when you do this? If you had foul muck on your hands would you be brazen enough to touch even the hem of an earthly ruler? Never!

Keep all that in mind; think about that fearful day and that fire; and the fearful places of torment. So let us in future turn our backs on the errors of our ways. For the time will come when the stage of this world will be destroyed. After that the struggle of life will be over. When we have departed from the stage of this life there will be no more business. There will be no more worldly crowns of honor. Now is the time for repentance; then will be the time for judgment. This is the time for contests; then the time for crowns. This is the time for labor; then for rest. This is the time for weary toil; then for reward. Wake up, I implore you, wake up! Let us listen eagerly to what is being said. We have lived in the flesh; let us now live in the spirit. We have lived for pleasure; let us now live for virtue. We have lived without due care; let us now have a change of heart. Where is the pride in earth and ash? Why are you full of conceit, my friend? Why do you boast about yourself? What can you hope for from the glory and wealth of the world? I suggest we go out to the tombs and see the mysteries there. Let us see nature torn apart, bones eaten away, bodies decomposing. If you are wise, take a moment to think about it, and if you are prudent tell me: Who there is a ruler and who a common person? Who is well-born and who a slave? Who is wise and who is foolish? Where there is the beauty of youth? Where is the attractive appearance? Where are the sparkling eyes? Where is the perfectly shaped nose? Where the lips that will set you on fire? Where are the beautiful cheeks? Where is the glowing forehead? Is not everything dust? Has not everything been reduced to ashes?...Tell me - is it nothing to you, my friend? Do you sleep and take it all lightly?...Let us seek the Lord while we have time. Let us do the good thing so that we can be delivered from the unending place of torment which is to come and be found worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven - through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction: The Season of Pre-Lent and Using this Booklet

Finally, the last seed falls on a good field. These are those people who faithfully stand by the standard of their religious convictions, these are those people who do not live for appearances, for the world only, but who are inspired to the depths of their souls, who live and die by the Christian religion. The just live by faith. Perhaps they do not shine on earth but to them apply the words of Jesus Christ: “Come blessed...take possession of the Kingdom of God prepared for you from the foundation of the world...” (Matthew 25:34).

An excerpt from “A Farewell Ballad to the Alleluia”

From every mountain, hill and vale
 Let Alleluia ring!
 And may each woman, man and child
 This Alleluia sing!

Alas! But little time is left
 With Alleluia near;
 We from thee soon shall have to part,
 Oh, Alleluia dear!

Until Septuagesima
 Will Alleluia last;
 From that grave moment on we must
 From Alleluia fast.

Then, in woe we shall, bereft
 Of Alleluia mourn,
 And clad with deepest sorrow wail,
 From Alleluia torn.

Then will our drooping eyes, deprived
 Of Alleluia weep,
 And we'll in penance far away
 From Alleluia keep.

*Composed by a monk of the Monastery of San Benedetto in Monte,
 Norcia, Italy*

St. John Chrysostom’s “Ninth Homily on Repentance”

When people sow seeds it is pointless casting them by the side of the road. In the same way it is pointless for us to be called Christians unless the name is matched by our actions. If you wish I can quote our brother in God James as a trustworthy witness, when he says: “Faith apart from works is dead” (James 2.17). So there is definitely a need for us to do good works. Without this being called a Christian does not benefit us. Do not express any surprise at this. Tell me – what gain is there in the work of a soldier if he is not worthy of his duty and does not fight for the emperor who feeds him? If there is anything worrying you in what I am saying, it would be better for him not to engage in fighting, rather than to fight without any regard for the honor of the emperor. How will he escape punishment if he is fed by the emperor but does not fight for him? Why am I speaking up for the emperor? We should also be thinking about our own souls. How, you might say, can I be saved when I am in the world and in the thick of all its business? What are you saying, my friend?

Do you want me briefly to show that it is not your location which saves you, but your lifestyle and your choice? Adam in paradise, as though in a harbor, suffered a shipwreck (Genesis 3). Lot in Sodom, as though at sea, was saved (Genesis 19). Job was found righteous on the dung heap (Job 2). Saul in the treasury, fell both from the present and future kingdom (1 Kings 18). It is no defense to say: “I cannot be saved while I am in the world and in the thick of all its business”. But what lies behind all this? It is because you are not regularly at prayers and at the sacred meetings. Do you not see that those who wish to win honor with an earthly ruler need to be at his side and to encourage others to intercede on his behalf? Otherwise they might forfeit what they are seeking. I am saying these things to those who absent themselves from the sacred meetings and to those who busy themselves with everyday matters and idle gossip at the time of the awesome mysteries of the Lord’s Table. What do you think you are doing my friend? Did you not make a promise to the priest who said: “Let us lift up our mind and our hearts”, when you responded: “We lift them to the Lord”? Do you not fear, do you not blush when you are shown up to be a liar at this sacred, awesome hour?

Prime Bishop Hodur's "Sermon for Sexagesima Sunday"

"The Seed is the Word of God." ~Luke 8:11

Mysterious is that process and relationship of a person to God. Nothing in the world has greater power than the Word of God. For the Word of God is the power of the Creator Himself manifesting itself in the human soul through the voice of the Church, our mother and father, our good friend--the inspiration of the Holy Spirit inclining us to the good life.

In the Holy Scripture we find much praise for the Word of God: "*In the beginning was the Word...*" (John 1:1); "*Are not my words as a fire, says the Lord, and as a hammer that breaks rocks to pieces?*" (Jeremiah 23:29); "*Blessed are they who hear the Word of God.*" (Luke 11:28); "*For it is not you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father Who speaks through you.*" (Matthew 10:20); "*I have given them thy word...Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth.*" (John 17:14, 17).

God wanted that the seed of this work and influence on the life of a person should be constant, that it might grow and give forth fruit a hundred-fold. He instituted sowers, His vicars on earth, the clergy; parents, overseers. And the seed of God falls upon the human field, but unfortunately not everything is accepted, and not everything grows for the benefit of humankind.

The Lord Christ Himself explains why this happens. Behold, one falls on a trampled road, a second on barren land, another among thorns and brambles, and only one on good and fertile soil.

The seed falls on a trampled road when people hear the Word of God but the devil comes and plucks it from their hearts. What do those biblical words mean, who are these people to whom evil and access ruin God's seeds? These are the people living for the world and its purposes. These are not the worst people. Indeed, they go to church, they hear the Word of God, but they do not live by Christ's principles. How much of God's seeds have we wasted for this reason in our own lives?

The seed that falls on the barren ground are those people who hear the Word of God but keep it only for a while because they do not have within themselves the basis for Christian religious life. When temptations come and torment, they fear struggle and suffering because they lack trust in the help of God.

The seed which falls on among thorns are those people who for life's pleasures, for whom a short, dissipated, profligate life has greater value than a life in accordance with the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These thorns which stifle the sprouts and shoots are concern for daily life, about one's own considerations, the searching for pleasures, the satisfying of the senses, searching for wealth as a means and a goal. "Enjoy life" is the motto of the present time.

THE SEASON OF PRE-LENT begins today and will last for the next two and a half weeks, ending with the start of Great and Holy Lent on Ash Wednesday. While the three Sundays of these weeks--Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima--draw their names from the Latin term for decades (i.e., 70th, 60th, and 50th) they are used by the Church to describe the number of weeks from that particular Pre-Lenten Sunday to Passion Sunday which is then two weeks before Easter. Thus, Septuagesima Sunday is 7 weeks from Passion Sunday, Sexagesima is 6 weeks prior and Quinquagesima is 5 weeks from Passiontide. Depending on the year, Septuagesima Sunday may fall between January 18 to February 21.

Likely originating in the Christian East, observance of this period in the Western Church dates back at least as far as St. Gregory the Great, who more broadly introduced it into the life of the Church in the 6th century when he was the Bishop of Rome. The intention was to provide a suitable period of time for all of the members of the Church to adequately prepare for Great Lent.

Historically, these special weeks were comprised of both a liturgical component and a personal spiritual/penitential aspect for each Christian, and also included a "pre-fast" as a way to ease into that about to be undertaken during Lent. Although the rules of this "pre-fast" changed over the centuries, the Season of Pre-Lent was nonetheless consistently observed throughout the entire Catholic West until the liturgical reforms of the Roman Catholic Church in 1969, when it was abolished within the Latin Rite. Despite this abrupt change for so many faithful Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and Byzantine Catholic Churches have never wavered in fully embracing the spirit of the short Pre-Lenten season, even if its duration, liturgical forms and rules for fasting differ from the Western traditions.

"For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard." ~Matthew 20:1

For its part, the Polish National Catholic Church has always retained the Season of Pre-Lent even if its observation was, for a time, optional. When the Prime Bishop and Bishops of the Church reinstated its Church-wide observance in 2014, their purpose was--and remains--very much aligned with those original goals from both the Church of the East and the West: to allot some time specifically to help us transition from the immensely joyful celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany (even though we also have a very short jaunt into Ordinary Time) and into the extended period of profound penitential sobriety of Lent.

Over these weeks, our Liturgy reflects this seasonal change. We will not sing the festive Gloria at Mass (except on very special feast days), the readings from Scripture proclaimed at Holy Mass will speak to us of God's loving expectations for us, the joyful Alleluia before the Gospel will be replaced by other simpler verses, prayers that speak of our spiritual preparation will be sung or recited by the priest who will vest in rose colored vestments instead of the green of Ordinary Time, as our decorated sanctuaries should progressively become more plain. All of this will lead us toward the simple solemnity of the holy season of Great Lent.

While there are no additional Church laws for fasting or abstinence in effect during this short season--other than our usual discipline of abstaining from meat every Friday--we have already seen that this was not always the case within the Church. Moreover, the "pre-fast" held an important place within the early culture of the Polish people who took it very seriously, referring to the Sundays of Pre-Lent as "Starozapustna" ("Old Meat Fast"), "Miesopustna" ("Middle Meat Fast"), and "Zapustna" ("Meat Fast"). So, although we are not required, if anyone wishes to follow in the footsteps of our religious and cultural ancestors and get a head start by fasting and abstaining from certain foods, drinks, activities, etc., they are certainly welcome to do

The most beautiful and most deserving human labor is to serve God. To serve a temporal lord, a king, or even the best regulated republic is a duty, but serving God arises freely, from the goodwill of a human being. In the Gospel which you just heard, the landowner does not force the laborers but invites them, "Go you also into the vineyard."

And today the Lord Christ, our Father and Judge, invite us over and over into the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, to the sanctification and perfection of our souls. He invites us to the most holy labor of a human being. We should fulfill it willingly for our own good and happiness. But how? Through what steps and experiences must this labor proceed in Christ's vineyard?

First, through prayer. Prayer? I hear scoffing! Yes! We should begin the very honest task with prayer with giving to God our thoughts and will and before all else or work whose purpose is our salvation are mined in our heart and the example of the savior tells us to. Before beginning his work of salvation, Christ went into the desert where he prayed and fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Christ the Lord prayed often and sincerely. From His heart came the signs and moans of prayer, and from His eyes tears, as he prayed for Himself and for others. And our prayer likewise should be vital and sincere. Our devotion should come from the depths of our soul. Whether we say prayers or sing hymns, we should inspire ourselves and speak to God like a child speaks to its earthly father. When Christ prayed before the Passion, bloody sweat appeared on his brow.

A second condition of work in the vineyard of Christ is that it must be orderly, systematic. A wise tradesmen or factory owner or farm worker must work according to a certain system, an order, a plan. And how do we do our most important work, the salvation of our souls for eternity? Only for appearance's of sake? Therefore in the church there is a need for stable organization based on a solid foundation. When Christ began to build the Church, he selected 12 disciples and sent them to build together with him the Kingdom of God on earth. The parish committee, the pastor of the parish, the parish school, the teachers and all the other organizations are to be part of this building, the building of the Church of Christ. It is necessary for us to accomplish this work wisely, conscientiously and earnestly.

A third condition or requirement of this, our work of salvation, is our energy, our life force with energy, with fervor, we are to do this work not lazily, but what just as he, our model and teacher did. As the holy scripture says Christ the Lord gave himself entirely as a sacrifice for humankind. He did not withhold even the last drop of his dear blood for us. And we are to work for-got in the church in the example of Christ, our Lord and Savior.

I am very sorry for all my sins against You, my neighbor and myself. Forgive me through Your son Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for me on the Cross to take away my sins. Grant that with Your help I may persevere in faith and good works until that day when I may live with You in Your Kingdom. Amen.

Dear Lord, as this day comes to an end I thank You for all Your blessings. I thank you for (my spouse, my children, etc.), my whole family and all my friends. I now commend my spirit into Your hands. Preserve me, my family and all my friends from all danger in harm; protect us from sudden and unexpected death. Bless and protect us through the night. Bless the souls of my family and friends who have passed away. May the souls of all the faithful departed through Your mercy, rest in peace. I ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be ...

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**A Prayer by St. Teresa of Avila
(1515-1582)**

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by You, always follow Your plans, and perfectly accomplish Your Holy Will. Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever You require of me. Help me respond to the slightest prompting of Your Grace, so that I may be Your trustworthy instrument for Your honor. May Your Will be done in time and in eternity by me, in me, and through me. Amen

**A Prayer by St. Ephrem the Syrian
(306-373)**

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Your servant. Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brothers and sisters, for blessed are You, unto ages of ages. Amen.

so and might rightly expect an increase in spiritual fruit to be born within themselves from these disciplines, if undertaken with the proper spiritual disposition and correct motives!

HOWEVER, whether or we not choose to get a jump on or even to ease into our Lenten fasting in some way, we should ALL be employing Pre-Lent to begin to chart the courses for our own Lenten journeys into the deserts of our souls with Jesus. This means that we must start by honestly looking into ourselves, striving to find those regions within our hearts that we have selfishly held back for ourselves, to uncover the darkened corners of our minds which are not yet fully illumined by the Truth, and to humbly acknowledge those aspects of our lives that do not yet completely belong to Jesus. In other words, we must use the time of Pre-Lent to prepare ourselves to fully and truly *repent* during Lent by joyfully embracing all that this entails.

The Church's Pre-Lenten liturgical life leads the way, sets the tone, and provides direction as to how we should also proceed in our personal preparations for Lent. Drawing upon the beautiful spiritual traditions of both the East and the West, the rest of this booklet offers a simple daily preparation program that each of us may employ so that the liturgy may indeed take Pre-Lenten root deep within us, begin to bud during Holy Lent, and burst forth into new life at Easter. Remember that our Easter joy is increased proportional to our spiritual struggle during Lent, and this, in turn, is best undergirded by the interior provisions made during Pre-Lent.

The ultimate hope is that the ashes with which we are marked exteriorly at the beginning of Great Lent might accurately signify our interior preparedness to undertake the Lenten journey of transformation, so that when we arrive at our celebration of our Lord's Resurrection we--with faith strengthened, hope fortified, and divine charity fully ablaze within us, with cleansed hearts and self-control regained by the aid of God's grace--may stand unashamed and proclaim with the whole Church: Christ is risen; He is risen, indeed!

Septuagesima: A Week of Recollection



O Holy Spirit, as I begin this day, enlighten my mind, inflame my heart, purify my body and sanctify my soul with Your holy grace. Be with me throughout the day and so strengthen me to control my passions and overcome temptations, so that I may strive to lead a virtuous life. Fill my heart with tender affection for what is good and right and true. Help me to be sensitive to the needs of others, faithful to my family and friends, loving to my neighbors and charitable to my enemies. Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, walk beside me today. Grant that I may be attentive in my prayers, thankful for my meals, diligent in my work and firm in my commitments. May my conscience be pure, my dress and appearance be modest, my conversation be edifying and my overall behavior be pleasing and acceptable to You. Give me wisdom for the choices I will make, patience for the problems I will face and courage in the challenges I will meet. These things I ask in Your most holy Name. Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be ...

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Individual Evening Prayers

From the Polish National Catholic Church's "A Book of Devotions and Prayers"

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Almighty and eternal Father, You fill heaven and earth with Your glory and majesty. Knowing all good gifts come from You, at the end of this day I offer You reverence and thanks for all the blessings I have received today. You have supported and strengthened me throughout the day and you have protected me from danger and harm.

Enlighten my mind, so that I may know what sins I have committed in my thoughts, in my words and in what I have done or failed to do. Grant me your grace, so that I may be truly sorry for breaking Your commandments and for displeasing or offending you.

My Dear God, these are the ways in which I have offended you. (Pause to reflect on the events of the day and the way you reacted in thought, word or action.)

Individual Morning Prayers

From the Polish National Catholic Church's "A Book of Devotions and Prayers"

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessed be the Holy and Undivided Trinity, now and forever. Amen.

Dear Father in heaven, thank You for bringing me safely to the beginning of a new day. Keep me safe throughout the day from temptation, sin and evil. O Lord, by Your help and guidance may my thoughts, words and all that I do be in accordance with Your holy will. Amen.

Almighty God, You have created me in Your image, redeemed me through the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and sanctified me by the help of Your Holy Spirit. In Baptism You have brought me into Your Church, through which You give me the graces needed for my salvation. You have protected me through the night and have given me this new day with its opportunity to serve You. What can I do for You in return for all that You have done for me? I will bless Your holy Name and serve You faithfully every day of my life. Amen.

I thank You, God, for this new day that You have made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. I will offer You all my thoughts, words and deeds throughout this day. With Your help, O God, may I not displease You. May all Your holy angels and saints pray for me. May I serve You faithfully by fulfilling Your holy will in everything I do. Bless me, Lord, and protect me from all evil until that time when I will be with You in Your kingdom forever. Amen.

Almighty Father, I believe in You; strengthen my faith. Centered in You, Lord, may all my hopes for this day be secured and may they fulfill Your will. I adore You as my first beginning and I aspire after You as my last end. Teach me to love You more and more each day, so that I may love You with all of my heart. Amen.

My Lord Jesus Christ, I dedicate this day to You. I desire to commit all of my thoughts, words and actions to You. With Your help, O Lord, may I think of You constantly throughout this day. May I speak of You and of Your loving care to all who will listen. May I serve You faithfully by being kind and helpful to others with every opportunity You give me. I desire that Your will be done in everything I do this day for Your greater glory. Amen.

1. Attend and participate at Holy Mass for Septuagesima Sunday.
2. Starting on Monday of this week, pray the **Individual Morning Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church's *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* (found on pages 36-37 of this booklet) as soon as you can after waking each day this week. Pray wherever you wish as long as the location is conducive to prayer and allows you to do so without distraction. This may be done with others or alone.
3. Starting on Septuagesima Sunday, engage the special **Spiritual Activity** for each day at a time and place where you can do so without distraction. Each of these should take no longer than 15-20 minutes, if undertaken in a sincere and focused manner. Given the included period of personal silent reflection, this is likely best undertaken alone, by following the steps for each day.
4. Starting on Septuagesima Sunday, pray the **Individual Evening Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church's *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* (found on pages 37-38 of this booklet) before bedtime. Pray wherever you wish as long as the location is favorable for prayer and allows you to do so without much distraction. Given the included examination of one's own conscience, this is perhaps best done alone.
5. Make sure you attend the evening Vespers Service scheduled at your parish this week.



*An Icon of
the Creation of
Adam and Eve*

1. At a time and in a place where you are comfortable and have few distractions, in whatever physical posture you find conducive to quiet prayer, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying the following:

*Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love! Grant, O merciful Father, that your Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify me; that He may penetrate me with His heavenly dew and make me fruitful in good works. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who with You, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever.
Amen.*



3. Prayerfully read Prime Bishop Hodur's "Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday" (found on page 39 of this booklet), which he delivered in 1920.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *What are the 3 conditions and ways by which we are to labor for Christ in our daily lives that he points out to us? Knowing that these 3 haven't changed in over 100 years, and that his words are as important for us today as they were to his flock when he first delivered them, ask yourself this: Am I faithfully fulfilling them as a Polish National Catholic?*



5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Eternal Father, I can have no secrets from You who knows all things. You see my many sins and weaknesses but also that I have done my best these past weeks to prepare for this Season of Lent, this hopeful time of penitent growth that is now upon us.

I have prayed daily, meditated upon Your power and glory as they were manifested in Your work of Creation, and have pondered the exalted role for which Your people were made. I have wept for the multitude of sins that we--intended to be the bearers of Your Image and Likeness in this world--willfully introduced through our lack of trust in You when we believed the devil's lie, and acted in disobedience. I have heard Your Son's challenging call to perfection and, admitting I have work to do, I acknowledge the sinful habits which currently hold great sway within my own heart.

Yet, I rejoice in Your faithfulness and mercy, made known again and again, and in this time of fulfillment I truly repent and, believe the Good News that, through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I can be cleansed from my sinful habits so that I am more like Christ at the end of Great and Holy Lent.

To that end, in order to directly address (**my sinful habit**), with the help of Your grace, I will (**pray, fast, give alms, etc.**) during Great and Holy Lent--and beyond!--that I may become ever more like Jesus Christ Your Son and our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Quinquagesima Tuesday Spiritual Activity:

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1. At a time and in a place where you are comfortable and have few distractions, in whatever physical posture you find conducive to quiet prayer, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying the following:

Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love! Grant, O merciful Father, that your Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify me; that He may penetrate me with His heavenly dew and make me fruitful in good works. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who with You, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

3. Prayerfully revisit step #6 on page 27. Go back and review the examination of conscience on pages 23-26 if need be.
4. Prayerfully revisit step #5 on page 33. Go back and review the instruction on "The 3 Practices of Lent" on pages 28-32 if need be.
5. Ask for help from the Mother of all disciples--pray to Our Lady the Untier of Knots (found on page 33 of this booklet).
6. **Humbly and contritely name a sinful habit (or two--but no more!) that you have come to perceive within yourself these last days.**
7. **Determine very specifically how you will enter into the desert with Jesus during Great and Holy Lent, to draw upon His strength to confront and be cleansed from these sinful habits from #6.**
For example: "I will address my...by praying this..." or "I will work with Jesus to change my.... by fasting from this...and then giving to those in need", etc.
8. Using #6 and # 7 above complete your Pre-Lenten preparations by thoughtfully reciting the following which you will also silently pray tomorrow after receiving blessed ashes at Church.

Septuagesima Monday Spiritual Activity:

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1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 10 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Genesis 1:1-2:3. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time and try to imagine the splendor of God's work of Creation, as everything came to be.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *What does this passage reveal to us about our God? What is the Creator's own outlook on everything that He had made? Do you think this has changed?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Septuagesima Tuesday Spiritual Activity:

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 10 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Genesis 2:4-25. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time and try to imagine the beauty of unspoiled Eden in which our first parents were created and placed by God.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *What does this passage reveal to us about God's plan for humanity's unique role within Creation? What were we created to be? How does this make you feel?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 10 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Exodus 14:1-31 and try to imagine the spectacular events of God intervening to save His chosen people from Pharaoh and his chariots and charioteers.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *Although they had just been freed from slavery, what was the Israelites' attitude toward God and His servant Moses? Yet, God takes action for them--what does this reveal about Him? How does this make you feel about God's attitude toward you?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Septuagesima Thursday Spiritual Activity:

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 10 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Psalm 138. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time while trying to imagine that you're there as King David sings this to God.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *What are the attributes of God that King David acclaims within the psalm? How do you think King David would have felt as he offered his prayer-song to God? Did you feel the same when you read it? Why or why not?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

5. Throughout this day, **ponder these 3 practices** given to us by Christ and now recommended to us by the Church for our every day discipleship but especially during Lent. **Begin to consider which would help you stay with Jesus in the desert to face and address any abiding sinful habits that you came to recognize within yourself yesterday.**
6. Finish up, by asking for help from the model disciple--pray to Our Lady the Untier of Knots, and then by making the Sign of the Cross.

Holy Mary, always knowing the presence of God during your life, you accepted with great humility the holy will of the Father and the mission of your Son Our, Lord Jesus Christ. Evil never dared to entangle you with its confusion and since then you have interceded for us in all of our difficulties. With all simplicity and patience you have given us an example on how to untangle the knots in our complicated lives. Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, with your maternal heart untie the knots that upset our lives. Most Blessed Virgin Mary, through your graceful intercession and by your example, untie the knots that keep us from being united with God, so that, once free of every confusion and error, we may find Him in all things, have Him in our hearts and serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Mother of All Good Counsel, pray for us! Amen.



Fasting:

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mortification by mortification, becoming clean of heart, and gaining the self-discipline necessary to do the Father's will, especially when it is most difficult.

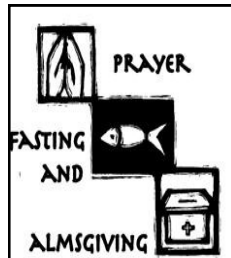
It's not easy. It's uncomfortable, and yet even in that it serves a great purpose. Like any suffering, the discomfort that comes from fasting shocks us back to spiritual life from the dull and oblivious patterns of consumption into which we can so easily settle in this world and, like prayer, instills within us the strength to cry out with Jesus in the face of temptation "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Recalling, though, that the true character of all penance is medicinal, we should understand that it is sometimes a bit painful and not fear to follow Jesus in this way.

However, we must approach fasting with the proper interior disposition, keeping the overall goals in mind. We must not grumble to ourselves or complain to others while fasting. One who does so may as well not even bother, right? After all, fasting is oriented toward becoming changed, more holy, healed of our sinfulness, closer to God, and freed from our attachments. How much sense does it really make to approach a holy discipline in a sinful manner? Instead, we must engage it in a thoughtful and prayerful way, with open minds and obediently docile spirits.

Regarding its great power as a spiritual tool for us, St. Jean-Marie Vianney (1786-1859) said that "the devil is not greatly afraid of...other instruments of penance. That which beats him is the curtailment of one's food and drink...there is nothing the devil fears more; consequently, nothing is more pleasing to God." Our enemy does not want us to come to our senses, regaining control over our appetites. He would rather we stay intently focused on the things of the world and never look toward eternity and the state of our souls. Fasting has a way of helping us come to see what is truly most important and putting everything else in its proper place.

To bring all three of these holy Lenten practices together, consider: fasting helps us pray more easily, as we come to more clearly recognize our complete reliance upon God for all that we truly need. By fasting, we learn to feel greater compassion for the poor and hungry and to save our own resources so that we can more generously help those in need.

In the end, therefore, we should engage all three of the holy Lenten practices together, realizing that they permeate one another and work together toward one goal--the only goal of Great and Holy Lent: our growing ever closer to Jesus and becoming holier and more virtuous as his disciples.



Septuagesima Friday Spiritual Activity:

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1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 10 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read the First Letter of John 4:4-21. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *What does the Apostle John make abundantly clear is God's greatest attribute? What is our response to this supposed to be? How are you doing in this regard?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Septuagesima Saturday Spiritual Activity:

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 10 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read from the Gospel According to St. John 3:1-21, trying to put yourself in the place of Nicodemus, hearing Jesus speak to you.
4. Reflect upon these questions, drawn from this whole week, for a few moments: *What do all the passages from our Spiritual Activities the first week of Pre-Lent reveal to us about God...His eternal plan for humanity...His offer to us through Jesus and the accompanying expectations for us? How can the 3 dimensions of the every day life of Christian discipleship that Prime Bishop Hodur outlines in his "Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday" help us as Polish National Catholics respond to fulfill our ultimate purpose and meet Jesus' expectations?*
4. Conclude this first week by praying the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

compassion, and merciful gesture after merciful gesture, giving as did the widow “who gave out of her poverty” (Luke 21:4) and not from any unneeded or undesired surplus--one will also gradually become less bonded to possessions, less motivated by the acquisition of wealth and, as the virtue of generosity begins to blossom within one’s heart, inspired to lay up “treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matthew 6:20).

As you now prepare to increase your almsgiving during Lent, consider the following:

--Buy **gift certificates from the grocery store and drop them off at the local food pantry.**

--**Go through your closets** and donate some gently used items to a local agency, thrift store, or homeless shelter.

--Increase your donations to the **parish collection at Mass.**

--Pick up the **lunch or dinner tab for an elderly person or a single parent**, or have something delivered to them without them knowing who its from.

--**Do it all in secret--except for your children. They will learn from your good example.**

--Choose **whatever form of giving helps you address the sins of greed or envy that you perceive within you.**

--**Most importantly, continue AFTER LENT.**

Fasting:

This discipline was also modeled for us by Jesus Himself when He went into the desert for 40 days after His Baptism. In the early Church, the Apostles set the days for fasting as Wednesday (to remember the day on which our Lord was betrayed) and Friday (to commemorate the day on which our Lord suffered and died). Today, the Church continues to call us to collectively fast and abstain throughout the year, but especially during Lent, on those very same days. While it is very important for all of us to do so together, it is equally vital that we each engage our own regimens of fasting, understanding its value and intentionally pursuing its great fruits.

Like prayer and almsgiving, fasting is also a therapy for sinfulness. Specifically, it is a most potent remedy for the deadly sins of gluttony and lust. With Jesus, we begin to regain mastery over ourselves by willingly setting aside things for which we have developed immoderate appetites. With Christ’s example, we learn to master ourselves, sacrifice by sacrifice,

Sexagesima: A Week of Self-Examination



As you now prepare to increase your prayer efforts during Lent, consider the following:

--Continue **Individual Morning and Evening Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church's *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* and also in this booklet. You can do them alone or with others.

--If you don't do so already, consider **praying the Holy Rosary every day**. Ask your clergy to help provide you with resources if needed. Pray it as a family, and watch what happens!

--Keep approaching our Lord Jesus by **Contemplating the Sacred Scriptures (especially the Gospels) with your imagination**. This wonderful method was promoted by St. Ignatius of Loyola and you were asked to do this in modified form during the Spiritual Activities of the last few weeks. You can find more information here: www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-what-how-why-of-prayer/praying-with-scripture/

--**In the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament--Who is the veritable fountain of humility--engage whatever form of prayer helps you address the sin of pride that you see within you.**

--Your priest will be happy to provide you with additional guidance.

--**Most importantly, continue AFTER LENT.**

Giving Alms:

The Lord Jesus commands us to take up this practice to help us combat the deadly sin of selfishness, instead calling us to look to the needs of others before our own and to begin to break away from our inordinate attachments to this world and its inhabitants. While we should always be doing so in our every day lives of discipleship, **Lent is a most appropriate time to ease the needs of others even more sacrificially, when we are striving to cast down those earthly things which would situate themselves between us and the Lord, or to which we would ascribe an importance which belongs to Him alone.**

Regarding this, St. Basil the Great (329-379) teaches that "the bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry man; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the man who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the man who has no shoes; the money which you put in the bank belongs to the poor. You do wrong to everyone you could help, but fail to help." **If one habitually heeds the exhortation of St. Basil**, then one will not only meet the needs of those with whom Christ will identify Himself when He returns as our Judge, but more--act of compassion by act of

1. Attend and participate at Holy Mass for Sexagesima Sunday.
2. Continue to pray the **Individual Morning Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church's *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* (found on pages 36-37 of this booklet) as soon as you can after waking each day this week. Pray wherever you wish as long as the location is conducive to prayer and allows you to do so without distraction. This may be done with others or alone.
3. Including Sexagesima Sunday, continue to engage the special **Spiritual Activity** for each day at a time and place where you can do so without distraction. Each of these should take no longer than 15-20 minutes, if undertaken in a sincere and focused manner. Given the included period of personal silent reflection, this is likely best undertaken alone, by following the steps for each day.
4. Starting on Septuagesima Sunday, pray the **Individual Evening Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church's *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* (found on pages 37-38 of this booklet) right before bedtime. Pray wherever you wish as long as the location is favorable for prayer and allows you to do so without distraction. Given the included examination of one's own conscience, this is perhaps best done alone.
5. Make sure you attend the evening Communal Penance Service scheduled at your parish this week.

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise
~Benjamin West, 1791



Sexagesima Sunday Spiritual Activity:

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1. At a time and in a place where you are comfortable and have few distractions, in whatever physical posture you find conducive to quiet prayer, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying the following:



Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love! Grant, O merciful Father, that your Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify me; that He may penetrate me with His heavenly dew and make me fruitful in good works. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who with You, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

3. Prayerfully read the excerpt from Prime Bishop Hodur's sermon for "Sexagesima Sunday" (found on page 40-41 of this booklet), which he also delivered in 1920.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *Prime Bishop Hodur's message is just as relevant today as it was over 100 years ago. What are the examples that he offers to describe the lives of those 3 out of 4 people in whom the seed of the Word does not take root? How often does this describe you? During this important week, attend the soil of your heart so that the seed sown through the Spiritual Activities will take root and bud to life.*



5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

but also because each of these 3 holy practices contains within itself a certain natural capacity to help us truly repent and actively address **the sinful habits** that we have come to recognize within ourselves.

The result is that, with God's indispensable grace, our prudently chosen and ardently undertaken **prayer, fasting and almsgiving are both the evidence that we seek to be cleansed not just of particular sins but freed of our deep-seated sinful tendencies and the means by which we partner with the Holy Spirit to accomplish this.** Consider each of them individually for a few moments.

Prayer:

Jesus gives us this powerful task--which He Himself so often embraced--because it is a primary way by which we stay connected to the Father, wherever we are. To pray is just to have an open conversation with the One who loves us more than we can know. Concerning this, St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-384) writes that "prayer is the delight of the joyful as well as the solace of the afflicted. . . prayer is intimacy with God and contemplation of the invisible."

Sometimes, however, we get so distracted with the things of every day life that we put off our prayer until we have time...until we're done with this or that task...or even indefinitely. And, we invariably begin to wither like plants that could be beautiful but neglect or even refuse to drink even though the unlimited source of water is so near. If this describes your thirsty soul, then the days of Lent are a perfect time to have some extra conversations with the Lord, calling out "as a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God" (Psalm 42:1) and knowing that your diligent efforts will assuredly secure water "welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Even more, and for our immediate purposes, **prayer is a powerful medicine to the deadly sin of pride in all its forms. Through regular prayer, we implicitly recognize and acknowledge our complete reliance upon God.** When we are constant in our reaching out to Him, we consciously proclaim our need for God in all things, and make a firm resolution to humbly, piously, and routinely approach our Lord as an indispensable aspect of our life of discipleship.

As a result, our pride, self-centeredness, desire for recognition, and even the terribly misguided notion that we need to somehow "earn God's love," all begin to fade away, prayer by prayer, heart-to-heart conversation by heart-to-heart conversation. Like a wounded and badly-infected limb that is gently soaked day after day, and in the process gradually healed and strengthened, so the pride-hardened heart is softened through prayer and the one calling out to God may, in time, claim David's words for his or her own: "a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not spurn" (Psalm 51:17).

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Quinquagesima Monday Spiritual Activity: 28

1. At a time and in a place where you are comfortable and have few distractions, in whatever physical posture you find conducive to quiet prayer, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying the following:



Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love! Grant, O merciful Father, that your Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify me; that He may penetrate me with His heavenly dew and make me fruitful in good works. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who with You, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

3. Prayerfully read Matthew 6:1-18, which is the Gospel for the Holy Mass of Ash Wednesday.
4. Pause for a few moments, then read the following instruction based on the Ash Wednesday Gospel.

The 3 Practices of Lent

Did you ever notice that Jesus never uses the word “if” when speaking to his disciples about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting during His great Sermon the Mount? Instead, he uses the word “when” with regard to these actions, implying that **He expects His followers to be engaging them** with the right inner disposition, and offering them without fanfare to the “Father who sees in secret.”

While these 3 pious endeavors are foundational for our every day lives as disciples of Jesus. However, **Lent is a most appropriate time to multiply our efforts** and embrace them even more fervently, offering them with Christ as sacrifices to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit,

Sexagesima Monday Spiritual Activity: 17

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the “Come, Holy Spirit”* from page 16 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Genesis 3:1-24. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time and try to imagine the details of this most tragic end to Eden.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *Though created for bliss as God's representatives to the rest of Creation, our first parents succumbed to the lie of the serpent, distrusted and then disobeyed God. What were the consequences and how do we still experience them today?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Sexagesima Tuesday Spiritual Activity:

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the “Come, Holy Spirit”* from page 16 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Matthew 5:38-48 from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time while hearing Jesus speak these words to you within your heart.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *How does Jesus change the law about retaliation and the treatment of “our enemies?” How high does Jesus set the bar for us? What must you change to keep progressing?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Sexagesima Wednesday Spiritual Activity:

18

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 16 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Luke 15:11-32 and try to imagine yourself within the parable of the Prodigal Son.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *To which of the two brothers do you more easily relate--the wasteful younger brother or the angry older brother? What is the importance of verse 17 and what does this teach us about repentance?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Sexagesima Thursday Spiritual Activity:

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying *the "Come, Holy Spirit"* from page 16 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Psalm 51. Pause for a few moments and then read it a second time while trying to imagine King David singing this very different type of psalm to God.
4. Reflect upon these questions for a few moments: *Nathan the prophet was sent to "call out" David who had sinned greatly with Bathsheba. How does this prayer-song show that Israel's greatest King took this to heart? What does David acknowledge as the key to true repentance in verse 17, and does this describe you?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

6. Pause now to reflect upon:

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-Any answers you honestly gave yourself which point out your individual sins, but even more,

--**Patterns which indicate sinful habits: ways of thinking, speaking, acting or failing to act whether with regard to God, yourself, or others. These sinful habits should be the focus for your Lenten work of active repentance.**

--**From any of these, choose either the one or two which most frequently surfaced during your self-examination or which you deem most injurious to your relationship with God, others and even yourself.**

--In your own words, pray an Act of Contrition for all your sins but especially for your one or two now revealed sinful habits.

7. Ask for help from the model disciple--pray to Our Lady the Untier of Knots, and then finish by making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to review your examination of conscience and also reflecting upon the follow up questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Holy Mary, always knowing the presence of God during your life, you accepted with great humility the holy will of the Father and the mission of your Son Our, Lord Jesus Christ. Evil never dared to entangle you with its confusion and since then you have interceded for us in all of our difficulties. With all simplicity and patience you have given us an example on how to untangle the knots in our complicated lives. Holy Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, with your maternal heart untie the knots that upset our lives. Most Blessed Virgin Mary, through your graceful intercession and by your example, untie the knots that keep us from being united with God, so that, once free of every confusion and error, we may find Him in all things, have Him in our hearts and serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Mother of All Good Counsel, pray for us! Amen.



Students – Am I respectful to my teachers? Do I try to do my work thoroughly and conscientiously? Do I encourage lack of discipline or a bad spirit among my fellow-students? Have I cheated or helped others to cheat? Have I treated my religious education lightly?

Parents – Do I try to know each of my children individually? Do I feed and clothe them to the best of my ability? Do I let them have their own way too often? Do I make myself respected by them, so that they respect God’s authority in me? When I give orders, reprove or punish them, do I do it for their own good? Or do I do it simply to “blow off steam” and assert my authority? Do my children confide in me fully? If not, why? Am I careful about their religious and moral training? Do I keep an eye on their education at school?

Am I a good example to my children in every way, that is, in religion, domestic life, business or professional conduct? Do I and my spouse work together in bringing up the children? Do we discuss these matters from time to time? Do I call my spouse’s judgment to question in the presence of the children?

Am I endeavoring to train my adolescent children in the use of freedom, allowing them enough freedom, but effectively controlling and guiding them? Do I treat them seriously as budding men and women? Do I keep an eye on their reading, amusements and the company they keep? Am I careful to let my married children see that I love them as much as ever? Do I refrain from interfering in their affairs? Have I made my sons-in-law and daughters-in-law feel at home in my family? Have I treated all my children alike without showing favoritism?

Husbands and Wives – Do I truly love my spouse? Do I try to make him/her happy, understand him/her and see his/her point of view? Do I pay attention to his/her inclinations, wishes and health? Have I enabled my spouse to understand me? Do we converse enough? Do I trust in his/her love even if he/she doesn’t show it openly? Have I neglected my spouse in favor of my children, my work, my friends, or anything else? Do I respect his/her personality and right to initiative? Have I done all for him/her that I might have done? Have I been selfish toward my spouse? Do I make him/her unhappy by being sullen, capricious, touchy, and bad-tempered? Have I spent too much money on myself? Have I been faithful to my spouse? Have I committed adultery? Have I wanted to do so? Have I tried to attract improper attention from persons of the opposite sex? Have I been selfish or uncaring in my marital relations? Have I sought or encouraged others to seek an abortion? Have my spouse and I sought to build a happy Christian home and freely welcome others to it?

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God’s presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit’s guidance by silently praying *the “Come, Holy Spirit”* from page 16 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read Matthew 25:31-46, imagining yourself as one among “all the nations,” listening to Christ the King and about to be judged and separated.
4. Reflect upon this one question for a few moments: *Knowing you must always see Christ in the faces of any other persons in need for the sake of your eternal destiny, are you, right now, a sheep or a goat?*
5. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Sexagesima Saturday Spiritual Activity:

1. When ready, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God’s presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit’s guidance by silently praying *the “Come, Holy Spirit”* from page 16 of this booklet.
3. Prayerfully read St. John Chrysostom’s “3rd Homily on Repentance” (found on pages 41-42 of this booklet).
4. Reflect upon these questions, drawn from this whole week, for a few moments: *What do all the passages from our Spiritual Activities the second week of Pre-Lent reveal to us about: the origin of sin...sin as mistrust of and disobedience toward God...sins of revenge and hatred for those who would make themselves our enemies...the sinful wasting of our spiritual inheritance or resentment over God’s mercy to others...sins of physical impurity...sins of omission by not seeing to the needs of others? Acknowledging Christ as our Judge, and having King David’s own example, we hear St. John Chrysostom exhort us: “do not condemn yourself that you have sinned, but punish yourself that you have not repented.” Prepare now to decide why you need to do so during Lent.*
4. Conclude by praying the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian (found on page 38 of this booklet), and making the Sign of the Cross. Continue to reflect upon the questions as they return to your mind throughout the day.

Quinquagesima: The Days of Decision



Do I think enough about other people? Do I realize my responsibilities towards those with whom I live? Do I seek to help them, do things for them, and encourage them in their work and good aspirations? Do I do my best to understand them, to put myself in their place? Do I give them a good example? Do I try to help them in their religious doubts or difficulties? Do I support them in their good works?

Am I at this moment nursing any hatred, dislike or grievance? Have I been quarrelsome or abusive? Have I hit anybody physically or hurt them by spiteful or unkind words? Have I borne grudges? Have I set about harming my neighbor by slander, gossip, and intrigue or otherwise?

Do I encourage whatever contributes to good relations with others? Do my friends and I deliberately form an exclusive group? Do I make myself tiresome to others by my difficult disposition and exactness? Do I provoke them by haughty remarks or “sermonizing?” Have I been a cause of evil to others (“given scandal”)? Do I respect other peoples’ property? Have I stolen anything? Have I damaged the property of others?

Sons and Daughters – Do I love my parents? Do I try to make them happy? Am I troublesome at home because I am selfish, casual, sulky, self-sufficient? Do I look up to and trust my parents and confide in them when I am in difficulties? Have I spoken unkindly of them to others? Am I respectful of them? Have I spoken rudely to them? Do I bear their faults and failings patiently? Am I obedient to them? Have I tried to talk things over quietly with them instead of criticizing them? Have I rebelled against them? Do I try to be of help to my parents? Do I willingly do my share of work in the house? Do I treat my home as a hotel and my parents as servants?

If my parents are older: Am I leaving them in want, poverty and loneliness? If they live far away, do I write or call them often enough? Is there any member of the family with whom I am habitually on bad terms? Do I try to understand, help and stand by my brothers and sisters? Do I give them a good example? Am I jealous of them? Am I patient, respectful and considerate toward my grandparents or other relatives? Do I remember that Sunday is the family-day, and that I must sometimes sacrifice what I want to do in order to please others?

Duties towards God:

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Holy Mass – Have I deliberately missed Holy Mass on Sundays? How often? Did I willingly give way to distractions or inattention? Have I laughed and chattered in church? Have I taken part in Mass and in the liturgical life of my parish as much as possible?

Sunday – Have I tried to make Sunday really the Lord’s Day? Have I encouraged rest and family relaxation on Sundays for others as well as myself? Do I work on Sunday simply to have extra money for luxuries?

The Church – Do I understand and welcome the social character of Christian life? Do I seek to worship publicly with my fellow-parishioners? Do I speak and think of the Church as someone who is a part of it? Do I feel myself at one with it, having a responsibility for its external failings? Do I feel myself a brother or sister of every other Christian, whatever his or her nationality or race? Do I interest myself in the Church’s life today, with its apostolic and missionary undertakings? Do I support and take part in them so far as I am able? Do I submit to the authority of the Church in a spirit of faith? Do I always speak respectfully of the Church’s Bishops and Priests? Do I show faith and trust in them, for example, by making suggestions or giving them information that may be helpful?

Personal Life:

Am I honest and natural with everybody? Or have I let pride get hold of me, showing it in my speech and manner? Do I think that I am always right? Do I accept criticism with grace? Do I try to see where I am wrong? Have I been hypocritical? Have I lied to cover up my mistakes or lied out of boastfulness? Do I “show off?” Am I too anxious to be rich? Am I generous? Have I given help to the poor and contributed to the Church’s material needs? Have I been careful to respect my body? Have I shown respect for members of the opposite sex? Is my disposition good? Am I a master of my powers and sensibilities? Do I look after the health and cleanliness of my body (or give too much attention to it)? Do I waste too much time?



Directions for the 3 Days of Quinquagesima:

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1. Attend and participate at Holy Mass for Quinquagesima Sunday.
2. Continue to pray the **Individual Morning Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church’s *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* (found on pages 36-37 of this booklet) as soon as you can after waking each day. Pray wherever you wish as long as the location is conducive to prayer and allows you to do so without distraction. This may be done with others or alone.
3. Including Quinquagesima Sunday, continue to engage the special **Spiritual Activity** for each day at a time and place where you can do so without distraction. These should take a little longer than those of the last 2 weeks, since these are the apex of your preparation. Plan on 25-30 minutes, if undertaken in a sincere and focused manner. Given the included period of personal silent reflection, this is likely best undertaken alone, by following the steps for each day.
4. Continue to pray the **Individual Evening Prayers** from the Polish National Catholic Church’s *A Book of Devotions and Prayers* (found on pages 37-38 of this booklet) right before bedtime. Pray wherever you wish as long as the location is favorable for prayer and allows you to do so without distraction. Given the included examination of one’s own conscience, this is perhaps best done alone.
5. Make sure you plan to attend Holy Mass on Ash Wednesday.



*The Sermon on
the Mount*
~Henrik Olrik, 1860

1. At a time and in a place where you are comfortable and have few distractions, in whatever physical posture you find conducive to quiet prayer, try to calm yourself, still your mind, and make yourself aware of God's presence within you.
2. After making the Sign of the Cross, invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance by silently praying the following:

*Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love! Grant, O merciful Father, that your Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify me; that He may penetrate me with His heavenly dew and make me fruitful in good works. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who with You, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever.
Amen.*



3. Prayerfully read the excerpt from Prime Bishop Hodur's sermon for "The First Sunday of Lent" (found on page 43 of this booklet), which, again he delivered in 1920.
4. Pause for a few moments, then recite the following based upon the "Prayer before Self-Examination" from the front of the Polish National Catholic Church's pew book for Holy Mass:

Holy Spirit, the Source of all light, You are the Spirit of wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Come to my assistance and enable me to make a good self-examination. Enlighten me and help me now to know my faults, for one day I shall be forced to recognize them before Your judgment seat. Help me to recall the evil I have done and the good I have neglected to do. Do not permit me to be blinded by self-love. Grant me true sorrow for my sins, knowing how deeply they have offended You. Help me to make a thorough examination of my conscience, so that I may see the sinfulness you want me to actively repent during this upcoming Great and Holy Lent. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

5. Although you have been doing this each evening these past 2 weeks, **NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF YOUR CONSCIENCE** with the assistance of these questions from the front of the Polish National Catholic Church's pew book for Holy Mass:

Duties towards God:

Faith – Is my life as a Christian improving or slipping back? Have I sought to know our Lord better? Have I missed opportunities of strengthening my faith by reading, courses of instruction, etc.? Have I tried to avoid whatever might be harmful to it? Have I sought to clear up doubts against faith? Have I refrained from showing that I am a Christian and hesitated to be seen going to church? Have I, when needed, tried to explain why I am a Christian and a Catholic? Have I said "I don't believe any longer." when I have lost the courage to do God's will? Have I accepted failure, illness, poverty and other disappointments in life in the spirit of humility?

Hope – Have I had trust in God? When I am tempted or discouraged, do I turn to the Lord for help and strength? Have I relied wholly on my own efforts? Have I given way to despair? Do I think of death in a way befitting one who believes in eternal life and hopes for heaven?

Charity – Do I want to love God above all? Do I prefer Him before money, comfort, sports, amusements, pleasures of all kinds and before all my other affections? Have I tried to see God in other people, including those with whom I do not get along? Have I sought to bring God into my whole life? Have I offered Him my work and play, my joys and sorrows? When I have had to make a serious decision, have I done so in His presence?

Religious Observance – Do I pray sometimes or regularly? In the morning? At night? Both? Have I tried to pray personally, that is, to speak to God as a living person? Have I prayed in times of personal depression or failure? Have I tried to vary my prayer to prevent it from becoming routine? Have I prayed for other people, to thank or praise God, and not only to ask Him for something?

Sacraments – Have my confessions been too infrequent? Did I prepare for them properly? Have I done all I could to receive Holy Communion whenever it was possible? Was I really fervent at Communion, in preparation and thanksgiving?