



# Introduction to Lent and Ash Wednesday

The Lenten season calls us to renewal, to “metanoia”, to a change of heart. It challenges us to slow down and take stock of our spiritual lives...how we interact with others, show compassion to those we meet, and see the possibilities of goodness in all creation. We return to the Lord and strive to live the values Jesus lived in daily life.

We are sinners, yes, and we also are Provident people redeemed, beloved and on the journey to wholeness. For this journey, the WPC office is offering you six prayer services, one for each week of Lent. As we did in Advent, we will be using quotes from our newest publication, *Providence and Compassion* as well as poems and prayers from the other new book, *The Art of Providence*. During the season of Lent the prayer services can be used by you individually, or with your local communities or faith sharing groups...the choice is yours. The questions for reflection at the end of each prayer service are from the *Providence and Compassion* book. Each author offered these questions as a way of integrating her particular article. There is rich material in both new publications and we are delighted to share it in this new way.

## ***A Short Ash Wednesday Reflection***

This Lent, God says, “come home to me, return to me with all your heart!”

***Reflection question:*** What does “coming home” mean to me?

***Reading:*** adapted from *The Art of Providence*

Imagine...a world kissed by compassion...if on a daily basis...one person in each household—Awake...to the “pressed-down, held-back, saved-for-a-rainy-day” act of kindness...and compassion. Inspired by one thought of “the other” escaping from a mouth—motivating...a kind act on the street...flashing...from one smiling face to another—whirling across neighborhoods...cities...states...countries, from one continent to another...swirling and swirling...from east to west...south to north...in a continuously flowing wave~~~~~Every day! Will you dare to risk being Providence in a small, new way...to make a difference in all of creation? --Charlene Schaaf, CDP

May our Lenten journey be one of continued spiritual growth, a time for going deeper, for seeing compassion lived out in many ways each day, and a challenge to each of us to be that compassionate presence and face of our Provident God.

Happy Lent!

*Barbara McMullen, CDP*

WPC Executive Director





# Lenten Prayer Service for Week One

**Leader:** Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray and begin our Lenten journey together.

**All:** Give us hearts free that carry hope and believe in peace.

**Song:** (Your selection)

**Readings:** adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

“Western understandings of compassion often embrace the phrase “walking in one’s moccasins,” while the Eastern version involves “walking a mile in the footsteps of the other.” This more intimate and also somewhat exhausting picture seems often to fit the therapeutic process. It also embraces the notion that, while insurance companies love short-term therapy, actual movement toward healing and wholeness can be a long and arduous journey.”

--Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

“What nurtured Jesus’ compassion was, in part, a deep life of prayer. He maintained a personal relationship to his God, his Abba.”

--Mary Bordelon, CDP

**Response:** *Where Compassion Lives* -- a poem by Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

Earth pulses...  
whales beach themselves  
at Nauset  
and are freed with human touch.  
Sand speaks to sky  
of redemption.  
No deceit here...  
Merely truth and freedom  
born of compassion.  
And I?  
Can I find my place  
in the trinity  
of sand, sea and sky?  
O north star  
lead me there.

--Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

# Lenten Prayer Service



## Week One

### ***Pause for silent reflection***

#### **Reflection questions**

- What are your hopes and dreams for this Lenten journey?
  
- When have you been asked to walk a mile in the footsteps of the other?
  
- What helps you maintain a personal relationship with your Abba, God?

**Closing Prayer:** Chapter Prayer by Peggy Flanagan, SP+, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

Spirit of Our Loving, Provident God,  
bless us as we gather for our  
Lenten prayer time together.  
Give us hearts free and fresh with enthusiasm,  
hearts that carry hope and that believe in peace.

Give us wisdom and courage  
as we cooperate with you  
in creating our future,  
the future to which you call us.

Fan into a burning flame the embers of your love,  
so that no fear may weaken the message  
we hold within and are challenged to share with one another  
and to send out to the whole world.

United in truth, love, justice, and joy,  
we trust that you, who have graced us in the past,  
will bless us again to make your Providence  
more visible at this time and in this place.  
We pray in Jesus' name, *Amen*.



# Lenten Prayer Service for Week Two

**Leader:** Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray. Be with us on our Lenten journey.

**All:** Give us hearts that carry hope and believe in peace.

**Song:** (Your selection)

**Reading:** adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

“In the New Testament, we encounter Jesus as the compassion of God. Out of that compassion he moved towards others, reemphasizing in the Gospels the injunctions of the Hebrew Scriptures: you are to love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself. Jesus modeled great compassion throughout his public ministry. In him we see the Son of God healing people of mental or physical illnesses, consoling the powerful, restoring life to some and forgiving sins of the repentant. He reached out the poor and marginalized and preached a message about the coming reign of God that everyone could access...he made that message available for all to hear.”

“Sharing lessons of providential compassion with my students, I am also able to present an invitation to them: to respond to God’s call through a life lived in right relationship with God, self, others and the universe, reminding them that part of those relationships is caring for others as God is caring for us.”

--Mary Bordelon, CDP

**Response:** *Abandonment* -- a poem by Leslie Keener, CDP, from *The Art of Providence*

We are living on the pulse of “God,  
obedience knit into our very beings,  
our breath, our blood, our thoughts flow on,  
not ours,  
but God’s,  
this life.

We sleep, we dream, we wake,  
bathed in spirit of unheard voice  
beckoning surrender:  
each giving over of breath,  
each heart imparting blood,  
each birth of thought.

We wait, breathless, lifeless, thoughtless,  
then...we are gifted,  
fresh air...blood...inspiration,  
not ours to clasp,  
but to give away again.

Nothing belongs;  
we are everything,  
throbbing on God’s own holy life.  
We are the living pulse of God.

# Lenten Prayer Service



## Week Two

### Pause for silent reflection

#### Reflection questions

- How can we as women or men of Providence choose to show compassion as Jesus did?
- Where and when have I had opportunities to make the message of compassion available?

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer by Dorothy Lentz, SP+, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

Provident God, you have given us a mission  
to plumb the depths of the mysteries of Providence  
and of compassionate love.

You have chosen us to be prophets,  
to proclaim loudly and visibly God's loving concern for those who suffer.

We are asking your Spirit to show us a way to be sacraments—visible signs—  
that will say to a troubled world today,

“Here we are, Providence People, who want to bring you Jesus' message  
of hope and concerned love.

We want you to help us know your needs and the best way to serve you.”

Lord Jesus, make us humble, simple, and loving in our search to know your will.  
*Amen.*



# Lenten Prayer Service for Week Three

**Leader:** Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray.

**All:** Give us hearts that carry hope and believe in peace.

**Song:** (Your selection)

**Reading:** adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

“The dynamic, loving relationship among the persons of the Trinity is reflected in creation. Thus, Jewish and early Christian thought recognized a providential plan in God’s love and care for creation. God gave the care of the earth over to humanity and with this the responsibility to care for Earth in the same manner as did the Trinity. As stated, one of God’s attributes in caring for creation was a sense of compassion as evidenced in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus. A compassion for struggling creation and a love for it brought God to live among us. Jesus came to show us how to live. Scripture lists many examples of Jesus’ compassion—his compassion for the widow who lost her only son, or of a hen guarding her chicks. Jesus’ life shows that God entered even into suffering. However, from his death comes the resurrection and new life. When Jesus died, all of creation was affected in that the spirit of the cosmic Christ flowed out to all creation, an act of unimaginable compassion.” --*Roberta Rorke, SP*

**Response:** *Mystery* – a poem by Maria Patterson, CDP, from *The Art of Providence*

Looking out over mountains misted  
In the blue haze of winter,  
the mystery of Providence profoundly breathes  
over and in me.  
Songs of the Creator hum their steady rhythm  
through every breath, drum-beating softly  
with every movement.  
Walking into the wooded landscape,  
trees tall and stately,  
extend their arms to me,  
swoop me up, embrace my being  
in wonder and reverence...  
One of the finest moments of God’s creative,  
dynamic involvement with me...with us.  
Dancing must be our song...  
drum –humming our breath...  
Our voice must be that of the silenced...  
our tears, holy watering of land, heart, soul...  
Self-giving must be our path for God’s  
creative, dynamic involvement,  
weaving through  
all moments—  
weaving all into one cosmic-dance response.

# Lenten Prayer Service



## Week Three

### Pause for silent reflection

### Reflection questions

- How can you extend compassionate care to all creation?
- In what ways has the mystery of Providence breathed over you?

### Closing Prayer: by Lucy Bethel, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

Provident God...  
Holy Mystery...  
Spirit Wisdom...

We stand before you in this moment of self-giving.  
Receive and embrace all that we are  
and all that we will become.

All we have is gift from you, O Living One.  
Teach us to use all of our gifts to co-create with you  
a world of love, justice and peace.

God of Providence, fill us with your love  
and gracious compassion so that we,  
with the whole universe,  
may participate in showing forth  
the Word of God in the flesh.



# Lenten Prayer Service for Week Four

**Leader:** Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray.

**All:** Give us hearts that carry hope and believe in peace.

**Song:** (Your selection)

**Reading:** adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

Compassion has an essential part to play in our “ecological conversion.” Compassion entails empathy; that is, a standing with and a feeling with the other. An honest look at Mother Earth and the plight of the poor as a result of human greed should certainly call us into a dialogue about compassion and spur us into action. Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si* deals with how we have been irresponsible and have damaged Earth. He calls for actions which he deems necessary to reverse this damaging trend. He calls for an ecological spirituality ...an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. --Roberta Rorke, SP

**Response:** *The Good Earth* by Katherine Ann Markel, SP+, from *The Art of Providence*

Soil and sea,  
air and breath,  
life and death.

Part of me,  
grass and tree,  
cow and bird,  
flock and herd,  
part of me.

Ladybug, bee,  
fowl and beast,  
hunger and feast.

Part of me,  
lake and rill,  
vale and hill,  
rain and snow,  
field a-row,  
time and birth,  
plenty and dearth.

Part of me.  
Part of me.  
Part of me.

O God, I AM Earth!



# Lenten Prayer Service



## Week Four

### Pause for silent reflection

#### Reflection questions

- What actions can I take to reverse the damage done to Mother Earth?
- When have I shown empathy or a standing with another?
- When have I experienced compassion from another who stood with me in a situation?

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer by Margaret Botch, SP, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

God-Providence, we find ourselves in your presence mindful of the need for changes in our world. Impelled by the same Spirit that lived in our foremothers, and the sisters who have gone before us, we reach out to the suffering to continue the saving mission of Jesus in the church and society of our time. Through the Spirit we become with Jesus the human face of compassion and your loving presence watching over the created universe. ...Provident God, call us anew; inspire all and each of us to be like a tree planted by streams of water that yields her fruit in due season. We pray in faith. *Amen.*



# Lenten Prayer Service for Week Five

**Leader:** Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray.

**All:** Give us hearts that carry hope and believe in peace.

**Song:** (Your selection)

**Reading:** adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

We are all brothers and sisters with all of creation. This sense of oneness—of being related to all—brings us again to our responsibility to others. We are sisters and brothers to each other, even to plants and animals. This consciousness encourages us to cooperate in the providential plan/vision for creation and leads us to contemplation of how the Spirit is leading us. We can imagine the Spirit moving over the earth in a loving presence we can call compassion. Religious persons have always been aware of the effectiveness of prayer for another. More recently, physics has demonstrated that an energy exchange between or among persons is a natural phenomenon. All beings emit energy. We can intentionally develop this energy into a “field of energy” by having a group of individuals form a like-minded community. This energy field can radiate out and affect others. An example of this would be the foundation of religious communities where the vitality of the founding group spreads to gather others into the initial charism.”

--Roberta Rorke, SP

**Response:** *God Calling* by Mary Montgomery, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

Come,  
be outdoors,  
breathe fresh air,  
listen to sounds of nature around you.  
See, really see, beauty;  
experience delight and grace of  
butterfly,  
hummingbird,  
goldfinch,  
petunia,  
clover and grass, and oh, the trees!  
Be.  
Reverence all creation,  
and find me there,  
and know that I AM with you, within you,  
as I am with all creatures in garden Earth.  
Come,  
be outdoors!

# Lenten Prayer Service



## Week Five

### Pause for silent reflection

#### Reflection questions

- How do these new understandings in cosmology impact the way you live your call to witness Providence?
- How or when have you experienced in community life this “field of energy” the author speaks of in this reading?
- What does this say to you about charisma?
- In this Lenten journey, how have you come closer to reverencing all of creation?

**Closing Prayer:** Providence Prayer by Denise Wilkinson, SP, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

Our lives, with all of the ups and downs,  
we gently place into your hands,  
Provident God.

Our loved ones, those here and  
those living in the fullness of your life,  
we gently place into your hands,  
Provident God.

Our daily work and all who come  
into our lives through it,  
we gently place into your hands,  
Provident God.

Our friends and families,  
all of the people of God,  
we gently place into your hands,  
Provident God.

Our planet and our universe,  
revelations of your love,  
we gently place into your hands,  
Provident God.

In your hands, may we learn to be  
expressions of your Providence,  
today and always. *Amen.*



# Lenten Prayer Service for Week Six

**Leader:** Spirit of our Loving, Provident God, bless us as we gather to pray at the close of our Lenten journey.

**All:** Give us hearts that carry hope and believe in peace as we prepare to enter into the time of paschal mystery—life, death, resurrection.

**Song:** (Your selection)

**Reading:** adapted from *Providence and Compassion*

“When I listen deeply to another’s journey or inner struggles, it evokes in me a deep compassion and a desire to be fully present in a caring, healing way. The gift of such compassionate presence is a life-long journey of learning first to be present, kind, and compassionate oneself and one’s own inner processes and then to be fully present to others on the way. One of the best gifts we can give and receive is the gift of listening. Listening with compassionate presence is both healing and nourishing. Such presence is sacramental; it is one of the most beautiful manifestations of the mystery of God’s providential caring.” --Ruth McGoldrick, SP

**Response:** adapted from *Listen to your Heart*, a reflection by Melinda Garcia, CDP Associate, from *The Art of Providence*

Do not worry about what others do or say;  
lead by example, for you are following God’s way!  
Take time for reflection, family and some fun, too,  
because Provident God will see you through!

Always seek to help those in need;  
seek to serve and relish every opportunity.  
Don’t judge appearances at first glance;  
underneath it all, it’s about serving others—give them a chance!

Listen to your heart  
Reach out to others  
Listen intently to their stories  
Make a difference  
Smile and spread joy.

Practice simplicity, charism, and poverty.  
For to serve, it is my destiny.  
Abandon yourselves to Provident God,  
for the glory is His. For this is how I am a leader and choose to live.  
Listen to your heart!

# Lenten Prayer Service



## Week Six

### Pause for silent reflection

#### Reflection questions

- How have I been a good listener along this Lenten journey?
- When was a time when you experienced someone listening intently to you?
- As you prepare to enter Holy Week, what is one thing you take with you from the Lenten prayers provided from the WPC office?

**Closing Prayer:** by Myra Rodgers, CDP, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

God of Providence, in whose loving hands lie the days and seasons of our lives, you are calling us to a new day, a new season as your Providence people. Draw us to listen carefully to the echo of your Voice in each person we meet.

Once again, invite us to be your Face, your Hands, and your Heart in this new era of a world that cries out for your loving care. Remind us of the history which is ours in the lives of the strong women who are our foremothers. Strengthen the hesitant among us and grace us with the courage and strength of purpose that characterized the great women who preceded us.

Lead us to forgive past hurts and divisions, that we may continue our journey into the future with one heart and one mind, hand in hand, no longer “we and they” but Sisters and Associates who continue to be lured by You, the God of Providence. In the Spirit of Jesus, we pray. *Amen.*

*Happy Holy Week and a  
Blessed Easter to all!*

