



All Saints' Connects

Lenten Connects

Session One | Spring 2024

Week of Ash Wednesday, February 12–18

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness;
give us grace to direct our lives in obedience to your Spirit;
and as you know our weakness
so may we know your power to save;
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. **AMEN.**

Gathering:

What is a risk you took that changed your life?

Scripture Reading: **Mark 1:9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.
Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Conversation Question:

*What word(s) best capture what "wilderness" means to you this Lent?
How are you experiencing wilderness this Lent?*

Closing Prayer:

O Lord, teach us your paths and lead us in your truth. For you we wait all day long.
AMEN.

Brother Jesus, in this wilderness teach me to resist temptation, to make peace with wild beasts, and to let angels wait on me, for your love's sake. **AMEN.**

Opening Prayer:

God of the unexpected,
when we come to our senses like the prodigal son,
give us grace to repent and turn to you again;
for where else can we go?
Gentle Father,
show us our sins as they really are
so that we may truly renounce them
and know the depth and richness of your mercy. **AMEN.**

Gathering:

What's an experience you've had with mortality?

Scripture Reading: **Mark 8:31-38**

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Conversation Question:

Have you actively avoided suffering, rejection or unpleasantness recently?

Was there a cost to you, to loved ones, or to your community?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you faced suffering,
not without pain but without denial or deflection.
Help me to face what I must undergo in my own life,
knowing you go ahead of me. **AMEN.**

Opening Prayer:

God our light,
make your Church like a rainbow
shining and proclaiming to all the world
that the storm is at an end,
there is peace for those who seek it
and love for the forgiving. **AMEN.**

Gathering:

What aspects or expressions of religion trouble or trigger you?

Scripture Reading: **John 2:13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Conversation Question:

What memory in your own formation, in retrospect, serves as proof points for your own faith?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you taught us not to make your house into a marketplace but a place to meet and know God. Help me not to rest my faith upon anything material, but only upon you. **AMEN.**

Opening Prayer

O God, you created us in Christ for the grace of good works,
not for anguish or judgment.

Teach us to keep a holy Lent
so we may grow and hope,
not boast or despair. **AMEN.**

Gathering:

A conversation I wish I could have again is ...

Scripture Reading: **John 3:14-21**

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”** Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Conversation Question:

How are you still grappling your way toward Christ’s light this Lent?

Closing Prayer:

O Jesus, draw us to do what is true and real,
So that our deeds might expose us to your light
And bring us to fullness of life. **AMEN.**

Opening Prayer

God of unchangeable power, when you fashioned the world
the morning stars sang together and the host of heaven shouted for joy;
open our eyes to the wonders of creation and teach us to see all things for good,
to the honor of your glorious name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gathering:

What is something you spend too much time worrying about?

Scripture Reading: **John 12:20-33**

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Conversation Question:

What are you feeling called now to drop, let go, or plant in God’s soil?

Closing Prayer:

God of life,
Teach us to lose our lives,
So that we may plant it in your good soil,
Where new life and much fruit may grow. **AMEN.**

Opening Prayer

God who gives us light,
lead us into the ancient and faithful procession that is Holy Week,
alongside our fellow believers
around the world and through the centuries. **AMEN.**

Gathering:

*How has your experience of friendship changed over the course of your life?
Why?*

Scripture Reading: **Mark 11:1-11**

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Conversation Question:

*Have you observed the fickleness of people or yourself towards Jesus
(or faith?)*

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, when you rode into Jerusalem
the people waved palms with shouts of acclamation.
Grant that when the shouting dies
we may still walk beside you even to a cross.
Assist us mercifully, Lord God of our salvation,
to contemplate those mighty acts
by which you have given us life and immortality;
through Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**