

The Seasons of Lent

OTHER BOOKS IN THIS SERIES

A JOURNEY WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

BECOMING AN EPISCOPA

BIBLE READING CALENDAR

BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

CELIBACY AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP

CENSING IN WORSHIP

CORE VALUES

EUCHARIST

HEAD COVERINGS

HOLY UNCTION

HOURS OF PRAYER

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SIGN OF THE CROSS

THABLITHA

THE PLUMB LINE

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH
adheres to the orthodox faith

The Seasons of Lent

Stepping Stones to Spiritual Renewal and Growth

Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan Metropolitan

Faith and Tradition Series

THE SEASONS OF LENT

Stepping Stones to Spiritual Renewal and Growth

Faith and Tradition Series

(English)

by

Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan Metropolitan

January 2017

Copyright © Author

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission from the publisher.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 Biblica.

Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Produced by

Liturgical Commission Authorized by the Metropolitan

Published by

Believers Eastern Church Synod Secretariat
St. Thomas Nagar, Tiruvalla - 689 103, Kerala, India.

website: www.bec.org

Printed in India.

Price: ₹40.00

BEC-FTS-09E-'17

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface | 7 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| 1. Explaining Lent Seasons of the Church | 11 |
| 2. Observance of Lent | 15 |
| 3. Special Days in Greater Lent Season | 23 |
| 4. How to Use the Book “50 Days Lenten Meditation” | 31 |
| 5. Practical Guidelines and Instructions | 35 |
| 6. Order of Service for the Church Gathering | 43 |
| Conclusion | 49 |

Preface

*In the name of the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit ✠*

Our faith and tradition are the two major factors that define our identity in Christian living. Faith stands for what we believe as a church and tradition denotes how we live according to our faith.

As a church, the faith of Believers Eastern Church is deeply rooted in the Holy Bible, which is the foundation of our life and spirituality. Our tradition is the practices of what the apostles, the composers of the New Testament showed and later was perfected by the vision of the early church fathers.

My hope is that the ‘Faith and Tradition’ series will bring renewal and life to our Christian

The Seasons of Lent

life and our church, to know Jesus, who gave His life and loved us, more intimately.

✠The blessings of the Triune God be with you all forever.

Synod Secretariat
January 15, 2017

✠Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan
Metropolitan

Introduction

What is Lent? Why does the church observe Lent? How do we benefit by adhering to the Lenten faith? Are there practical guidelines for observing Lent? Questions like these and many more, find their answers in this booklet.

The Lenten season has always stood for accelerated spiritual growth. These are special times when we choose to spend our days in denial, fasting and meditating, praying and supplicating, choosing to serve others and by walking in humility as devote followers of Christ.

By accepting to be a part of this spiritual renewal, the church is all the more blessed to be a channel of help to you in this hallowed journey with the Lord.

The Seasons of Lent

Our book on Lenten Meditation will help our churches to have regular meditation, and evening prayer meetings which will unite us more as His witnesses through our lives, in the community we live.

Lent is not a demand or a command from your Metropolitan. On the contrary, it is our privilege to observe this as part of our church living in worshipful discipline.

May God bless you as you walk in obedience to the Lord and His church.

CHAPTER ONE

Explaining Lent Seasons of the Church

The word “Lent” comes from the old English word “lencten,” which means “spring” - when the days lengthen and new life springs forth. It is a time when we anticipate the victory of light and the life of Christ over the darkness of sin and death. It is, according to C. S. Lewis, a season of “happiness and wonder that makes you serious.”

Lent is a season in the Christian Calendar with an invitation to all believers to draw closer to the Lord and meditate on Him. It is a period of fasting, moderation and self-denial traditionally observed by all Christians. It’s a time to reflect, introspect, repent, and pray as

The Seasons of Lent

a way of preparing and consecrating oneself to God. The major focus and purpose is to provide us an opportunity to set aside a time of reflection for God and for our personal lives in the light of God's Word and the life of Jesus Christ our Saviour - His life and mission, teachings, suffering, sacrificial death, burial and resurrection and the Great Commission. Lent is traditionally marked by confessional prayer, fasting, and caring for the poor.

There are different periods of Lent observed by the church at large. Some are of longer periods and others shorter; and yet others for just a day. Lent is the way to spiritual growth and a journey towards knowing the Lord Jesus more intimately and closely. Fasting is physical as well as spiritual. In the physical fast the body abstains from food and drink. In the spiritual, one abstains from evil intentions in word and deed.

Following are the commonly observed Lenten seasons by the church:

- 1. Twenty-five (25) days of Advent Lent:** It is commonly a twenty-five day period, beginning with the first Sunday of Advent. It is a preparation before the annual celebration of Christ's Incarnation which is Christmas. In addition to fasting, emphasis is laid on giving alms.
- 2. Three (3) days of Fast of Nineveh:** It is a three-day fast commemorating the repentance of the Ninevites at the hands of the prophet Jonah. It commonly falls before the beginning of the Greater Lent.
- 3. Fifty (50) days of Greater Lent:** It is a season of 40 to 50 days, including the six Sundays before Easter. The purpose of Greater Lent is to prepare the faithful to not only commemorate, but experience the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, the Lord of the church.
- 4. Apostles' Lent:** The fast begins on the second Monday after Pentecost and ends on June 28; the day prior to the Feast of the Saints Peter and Paul on June 29.

The Seasons of Lent

After the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostles began to prepare for their departure from Jerusalem to spread Christ's message. As part of their preparation, they began a fast accompanied by prayer to ask God to strengthen their resolve and to be with them in their missionary undertakings.

- 5. Fifteen (15) days' Lent:** This fast comes down to us from the early days of Christianity. The church celebrates the fast of Saint Mary for 15 days to commemorate her ascension or her home going to heaven.

CHAPTER TWO

Observance of Lent

1. Lent is a season for our spiritual checkup

- To focus on our life, to find where we stand in relation to God and to examine what kind of a human being God would want us to be change - Psalm 139:23-24.
- To evaluate our thought life, moral life, relationship with God and others, faithfulness in fulfilling the promises we make before God, and our hunger for the things of God.
- To spend time to confess sins and straighten our walk with God.

The Seasons of Lent

- To seek God, to find fresh strength, renew our lives, and make some serious decisions and resolutions in our pursuit to a Christian life.

2. Lent is a season to set straight our priorities (St. Matthew 5, 6)

- This is an opportunity created by the church fathers to have spiritual discipline; a purposeful, deliberate time to seek God for who He is, rather than what He can give us.
- In a sense, we make way for our spiritual well-being, allowing our spiritual senses to become a little more alive; a little more attentive; a little more aware of God and His voice.
- It is a time to make unswerving commitments to spiritual disciplines in our day-to-day life; however heavy-laden we are. It's also a time of reckoning, to evaluate our commitment to spiritual disciplines and values.

3. Responsibilities during Lent

A. Giving up

- a) Letting go of anger, jealousy, malice and deliberately concentrating on weeding out well-embedded traits like swearing and yielding to all sorts of temptations.
- b) Forgoing those things that normally take away our time, energy and money and instead, focusing on nurturing our spiritual health.
- c) Making deliberate efforts to cut off certain things we invest our time on every day.
 - Unplugging from social media.
 - Turning one's back on television, by either shutting it off or giving up a favourite show.
 - Saying NO to music.
 - Cutting down on the usage of mobile phone.

The Seasons of Lent

d) *Why do we need to give up?*

To spend that extra time in prayer, reading God's Word and listening to the voice of God and thus being nearer to Him.

i) Embrace a simple lifestyle

- Practice a simple diet. Abstain from extravagant and lavish eating habits.
- Refrain from gorging on sweets, chocolates and such other stimulants.
- Give up the habit of dining out during these 50 days.

ii) Purpose

By denying ourselves something we enjoy, we discipline our will and triumph over trivial and ephemeral pleasures.

B. Adding On

During Lent, we are not merely concerned about the tangible ways of giving up certain things we would like to do; it is a perfect time for us to add on things that are more significant to our lives.

Observance of Lent

- a) **Fasting:** When we give up something during Lent, we embrace an excellent spiritual discipline like fasting. It is a time to confess, repent and gain victory over evil. This will set us a pattern in self-discipline even when Lent is over.

To attain deeper spiritual results, we can set apart either a day in a week or a few days during this season for fasting. One thing we should be careful to remember is that we don't use this time to do any other work.

- b) **Prayer:** Lent is a perfect time to develop and strengthen the discipline of a regular prayerful life.
- Morning and evening prayer, beyond that of regular family prayers.
 - Hours of Prayer: It is the best way of infusing prayer into a whole day's routine. Set apart 10-15 minutes in the morning, before noon, in the afternoon and in the evening; put a

The Seasons of Lent

halt to everything you do and spend the time in prayer.

- Set apart days of silence—time when we free ourselves from everything and are alone with God.
- Other than individual prayers, commit to participating in all prayer activities in your parish during this season.

c) Studying God's Word

- Set apart time to read and meditate on passages from the Bible as given in the Lectionary and the Daily Schedule for the Lenten season.
- Arrange additional Bible studies each week that focus on Christ, His suffering on the Cross, victory over sin, and on the themes given in the Daily Schedule.

d) Showing kindness and alms-giving

- Being kind and giving alms is a believer's call and commitment for

Observance of Lent

all seasons. However, Lent is a special season when we grab opportunities to show kindness and love to the needy around us.

- When we give up something during Lent, we save up some money. This is not to be preserved for our personal investment. On the contrary, we should find ways to invest this amount in noble deeds.
- Showing kindness is not just through giving money. We can always tune our hearts to look for ways to help others. These could be soothing words or whispers of encouragement, comforting words to ease pain and hurt, prayers for the sick and ailing and words of inspiration to draw the faithful to the church.

CHAPTER THREE

Special Days in Greater Lent Season

The season of Lent observes significant aspects of Christ's life on special days. These events and occasions are observed with great reverence by the church. Our church too, being part of the Universal Church, observes them with joy and enthusiasm. The importance and meaning of a few of these days are highlighted offering practical ways to make them purposeful and meaningful. Each day's meditation in this book is made to complement them.

Ash Wednesday: Ash Wednesday is the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday. It is regarded as the first day of the Season of Lent. It offers worshippers a chance to realize

The Seasons of Lent

the consequences of sin. It is a solemn day of reflection, an introspection into our personal and community life; into areas that need change and transformation.

On this day, some Christians mark their foreheads with ash as a symbol of sorrow and mourning over their sins. During Ash Wednesday service, the minister will lightly mark with ash, the sign of the cross on the foreheads of worshippers. Historically, ash signified sorrow over sins committed and also their purification (Refer: Job 42).

Others generally spend this day as a day of repentance and confession in the presence of the Lord. Some, individually, others, collectively, as a family and as a parish.

Passion Week: It is also called Holy Week. It is the week before Easter Sunday, commemorating events of Jesus' last days on earth. This week includes:

1. Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday is the Sunday before Easter Sunday and it is the sixth Sunday of the Lenten Season.

Special Days in Greater Lent Season

This Sunday remembers the triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem, riding a donkey. The triumphal entry was marked by crowds who were in Jerusalem for the Passover waving palm branches and proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah—the King. The Gospels tell us that Jesus rode into the city on a donkey, enacting and fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah Chapter 9 : 9. This emphasizes the humility that was to characterize the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed and the life the King lived.

On this day, the people of God shall come to the church and celebrate the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem by waving palm branches and singing songs of joy and praise followed by a procession into the church.

Children should be made an integral part of this celebration and service as this provides a good opportunity to involve them in the worship and life of the community.

Use the Order of Service and liturgy of the Word provided. It will make worship and meditation meaningful and focused.

2. **Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday)**

Maundy is derived from the Latin word *mandatum*, meaning “commandment.” Maundy refers to the command Jesus gave His disciples at the Last Supper—to love, and in humility serve one another and to remember His sacrifice.

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before the day of Easter. This day is also known as “Holy Thursday” or “Great Thursday.” On this day, we remember the Last Supper Jesus shared as the Passover meal with His disciples on the night He was betrayed. The service on this day is typically a solemn occasion, marked by the shadow of Jesus’ betrayal and focus on the path that led Him to the cross.

Two important Biblical events become the primary focus of Maundy Thursday service:

a) Jesus washing the feet of the disciples

The Gospels say that before the Passover, Jesus washed the feet of His

disciples. In this lowly and most humble act of service, Jesus “showed them the full extent of his love” (St. John 13 : 1). By this example, Jesus himself demonstrated to us our duty to love one another through humble service. For this reason, the practice of foot washing ceremony is part of Maundy Thursday services in many Christian churches.

b) The Last Supper

During the Passover meal, Jesus took bread and wine and asked His Father to bless them. Then He broke the bread, giving it to His disciples and said: “This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” He then took the cup of wine and blessed it, shared it with His disciples, and said: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” These events recorded in St. Luke 22:19-20 describe the Last Supper and form the Biblical basis for the practice of Holy Communion. Because of this reason,

Holy Communion is part of Maundy Thursday service universally in all churches. Likewise, many congregations observe a traditional Passover Seder meal.

3. **Good Friday (Holy Friday)**

The Friday of the Holy Week is traditionally called “Good Friday” or “Holy Friday.” On this day, the church commemorates Jesus’ arrest, trial, the way of the Cross, suffering, crucifixion, death, and burial. Church service on this day focuses mainly on meditating upon the Passion and suffering of our Lord Jesus as He journeyed from the garden of Gethsemane to the Cross of Calvary.

Good Friday service has a series of Scripture readings, a short message—a short meditation, time for personal introspection and prayer. These devotional messages are based on the Seven Last statements of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. They are:

Special Days in Greater Lent Season

- 1) Father, forgive them... - St. Luke 23:34.
- 2) This day you will be with me in paradise - St. Luke 23:43.
- 3) Woman, behold your son... - St. John 19:26-27.
- 4) My God, my God... - St. Matthew 27:46, St. Mark 15:34.
- 5) I thirst - St. John 19:28.
- 6) It is finished! - St. John 19:30.
- 7) Father into your hands... - St. Luke 23:46.

4. Holy Saturday

This day is mostly used for quiet and private meditation as believers contemplate the darkness of a world without Jesus, filled with souls who do not know God and have no hope for the future. Their only hope is in Jesus, the Saviour and our Lord. The people of God, on this occasion, experience a deep sense

of burden and an urge to pray for those who know not Jesus in our world. The church usually gets ready to prepare for the early morning Easter Sunday Service.

5. Easter

Easter is the day of sacred celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Normally, we organize an early morning Easter Sunday service with the celebration of the Holy Communion, remembering the resurrected Christ and our Lord. The worship should include joyful songs, expressions of joy and praise and the teaching of God's Word. The teaching should motivate and invite the people of God to experience and live the power of Jesus' resurrection in their personal walk with the Lord. And, it should be presented with practical examples on how to demonstrate this in a world filled with hopelessness and dismay for a believer to practically live this life.

CHAPTER FOUR

How to Use the Book* **“50 Days Lenten Meditation”**

Our Christian life here on earth must be governed by the church’s journey of faith. These daily lessons in meditation and selected scriptural passages will help and guide us to see the roles we have to play as individuals, families and as members of the church.

Each day of the devotional has different themes with focus on personal and spiritual life needs and requirements. It points to Jesus, to put it in a simple way. Lent is all about Jesus.

*This is a special book, a devotional, which all churches will find useful and meaningful during the 50 days of Lent. We recommend that evening worship be held, wherein the daily meditation passages will be of significant relevance.

The Seasons of Lent

Our aim is to ponder over each day with its particular focus on the journey Jesus took to the cross, so that, we in turn, can learn to take up our crosses and follow Him. As a devotional guide for the season of Lent, each daily meditation consists of selected elements aimed at directing our heart to our Heavenly Father and to our Lord Jesus Christ by deepening our understanding of the events that led to Easter. These are:

Theme: Each theme is based on a passage from the Scripture. It helps us to meditate and learn. The themes are not closed-end topics or subjects. Each subject provides a broad platform for each day upon which the priest, the believers and the community can study, meditate and apply the instructions to the need and context of individual and collective life.

Bible Passages: The passages from the Bible are meant for reading and meditating further during the day, allowing the Holy Spirit to help us in committing ourselves to all that's Jesus-centred.

Devotional Thought: This contains a simple explanation of a passage and a brief explanation of the theme. This is meant for each individual, to realize where and what he lacks and to explore means by which the gaps in our spiritual life can be filled.

Questions: Questions are personal in style. They point into the depths of our hearts, to help us introspect. The answers we find will deepen our faith, straighten our lives and help us walk in the light of the instructions.

Application: It is very personal in nature and serves as an individual guide to take correct decisions based on instructions received and working toward making it a life style.

Prayer: The prayer is a model in itself. It's a supplication, helping us to pray specifically seeking God's mercy and grace for living it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Practical Guidelines and Instructions

The impact the book on Lenten Meditation leaves could vary from one individual to another depending upon its different settings. An entire congregation could use the book while in church, a family could read it together or it could be the best guide for a person within the confines of his solitude to dwell upon each passage or each message. Given below are specific guidelines to do this practically in any of these contexts. Thus, each day's meditation would give us fresh insights into our lives, our needs, our lack and how best to lead enriching and fulfilling lives as true messengers of the Messiah.

In the Church

The Congregation can find a convenient time to gather either in the morning or evening or on both occasions. Keep the following simple pattern provided as in the Order of Service for each day.

- 1) Begin with Adoration (Kauma).
- 2) Songs of Praise: Selection of songs should be carefully done based on the theme given for each day. And they can be contemplative and meditative in nature. The worship team can lead the congregation in singing a maximum of 2-3 songs.
- 3) Bible Lessons: The same pattern we have for the Sunday worship service should be followed here. Different people who are assigned with the given passages for each day will do the reading. The priest/deacon will read the Gospel lesson.
- 4) Reading the Meditation: The priest of the parish/local church will read the meditation for the day. He also will give a focused explanation to the congregation upon the message read.

Practical Guidelines and Instructions

- 5) **Silence:** Here, the priest will lead the congregation to a period of silence for 5 to 7 minutes. It is the time to silence our heart and mind before the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to show us our need to confess, repent and surrender based upon the message heard.
- 6) **Confession:** Our Lenten journey must begin and end with God. There needs to be confession as we consider the greatness of the Holy God and our own wretchedness. This will help us to know that we are mindful of our sins, failures, and frailties, which will ultimately lead us to experience His presence in our lives. God does not turn us away, He calls out to us to confess our sins and be cleansed.
- 7) **Prayer of Commitment:** The priest will invite the congregation to join him in a prayer of commitment, applying the lessons and instructions received from the Lord.
- 8) **Creed of the Church:** It is always important to confess the creed of the church together

The Seasons of Lent

as a mark of our commitment to the Lord and our faith affirmations.

- 9) Lord's Prayer: End meditation and the service with the Lord's Prayer.
- 10) Benediction: The priest pronounces the benediction (blessing) upon the people.

[If the priest/ deacon is not present, people leave after saying the Lord's prayer and marking the Sign of the Cross.]

In the family/home

Each family should set a convenient time when all members can come together for family prayer. The head of the family or anyone capable of leading the devotion can take turns each day to lead the family in prayer. The simple pattern as given below will assist in making it effective and can be used as the Order of Service.

- 1) Begin with Adoration or by saying, "Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

[While saying, make the sign ✠ of the Cross]

Practical Guidelines and Instructions

- 2) **Prayer:** It is to acknowledge God's presence in the family and His mercy over each member. We turn to Him in all earnestness, asking Him to bless the family.
- 3) **Song:** Sing 2 to 3 songs. The songs should be familiar, relevant and have to be selected beforehand by the head of the family or someone who is familiar with them.
- 4) **Reading Bible Lessons and Meditation:** Assign the duty of reading the meditation to different members each day. It would be ideal if the head of the family (father/mother) could do it. To go a step further, exhorting each member of the family to live their lives based on each day's meditation would go a long way in helping them to lead their lives in the company of the Lord, devoid of fear or doubts.
- 5) **Prayer of Confession:** The person who leads each day's meditation or the head of the family, if present, can invite the rest of the members to join him/her in confessing sins and failures individually and collectively,

The Seasons of Lent

asking for God's mercy and cleansing and seeking God's help to live according to the decision taken before Him.

- 6) Prayer of Thanksgiving: The member leads in thanksgiving, remembering God's blessings and His grace.
- 7) Creed of the Church: It is always important to confess the creed of the church together as a mark of our commitment to the Lord and our faith affirmations.
- 8) Lord's Prayer: End meditation with the Lord's Prayer.
- 9) Benediction: If the head of the family is present, he pronounces the blessings and everyone makes the sign of the cross.

Individual

To be alone with the Lord is an experience which defies description. How do we get to be alone with the Lord? It's important to set aside some time every day for individual reading and meditation. The dawn, mid-noon, dusk or the night are times when people seek

to be alone with the Maker, our God and our Messiah, by reading, meditating and praying. The most important thing is to set apart this time and make sure that it's our God-time. Choose a quiet place or quiet segment of the day devoid of disturbances and distractions. It can be under a tree or in a room. Once we get to be one with the Lord, we experience the sensation of cares and anxieties fading away. Instead, we feel calm and relaxed and begin to feel the presence of God. The simple pattern as given below will assist in making this unique experience effective and this can be used as the Order of Service.

- 1) Begin by saying: Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[While saying, make the mark of the sign ✠ of Cross]

- 2) Prayer for God's presence: Acknowledge the greatness of God and His presence and thank Him for all the goodness you have experienced and ask God to open your mind and heart, and grant you spiritual understanding.

The Seasons of Lent

- 3) Song: Sing one or two songs of praise and adoration. Put your heart and soul into your songs.
- 4) Reading the Meditation: Do not rush through meditation. Let every word seep into your soul. Let it allow you time for reflection and thought.
- 5) Silence: Be silent for upto ten minutes and reflect upon what was read. Allow God to speak to your inner self so that the Holy Spirit gets imprinted on your heart and mind.
- 6) Prayer of Commitment and Decision Making: Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help see what God may be saying through what was read, thought, and felt. Say a prayer, asking God to help you follow the guidance that was received. Never forget to thank God for speaking to you.
- 7) Lord's Prayer: End the meditation with the Lord's Prayer and by marking the Sign of the Cross.

CHAPTER SIX

Order of Service for the Church Gathering

[This is a model for the Church gathering during these days of Lent. It can be 45 minutes or 1 hour service.]



[All Stand]

Priest: Let us stand.

Entrance Song: A carefully selected song to begin the service.

1. Adoration (Kauma): We begin just as in any normal congregational service.

P: ✕ Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: ✕ As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The Seasons of Lent

P: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty, heaven and earth are filled with your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

C: Blessed is He who has come and is to come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

P: Holy are you, O God.*

C: Holy are you, Almighty.

P: Holy are you, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠ for us, our Lord Messiah, have mercy on us.

[Repeat three times.]*

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Lord, be gracious to us. Lord, have mercy on us and accept our adoration and service.

P: Praise to you, O Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Creator.

All: Praise to you Lord our Messiah, for being merciful to us sinners. Bless O Lord.

P: Our Father in Heaven,

**All: Hallowed be Your Name.
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory are forever! Amen.**

Opening Prayer: The Sunday Liturgy book has prayers for special days of services.

2. Songs of Praise

3. Liturgy of the Word/Bible Lessons

During a church gathering or family devotion those who are assigned to read Bible passages must come prepared to rise up to the task. The reading should be flawless, and audible, with apt pauses. They should read out the pertinent passage at least twice, with a pause in between so that the congregation gets time to look up

The Seasons of Lent

the passage in their Bible. If the congregation comprises multi-lingual groups, it should be announced accordingly. These guidelines can be followed before and after the reading.

Reading from the Old Testament

Deacon/Reader: Let us give attention to the reading of the Old Testament, taken from the book of [name of the book], chapter [chapter number], verses [verse] to [verse].

[After reading the passage, the deacon/reader says the following:]

Deacon/Reader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Responsorial Psalms

[The Reader leads the congregation in a responsive reading of the selected Psalm for the day as listed in the Bible passages for each day]

Deacon/Reader: The Psalm reading is taken from [Psalms, number] verse to verse. We will read it responsively.

[After the reading of the Psalm, all will say the following together]

All: Amen.

Order of Service for the Church Gathering

Reading from the Epistle

Deacon/Reader: Let us give attention to the reading of the Epistle written by Saint (Name of the apostle, name of the Epistle, chapter [chapter number], verse [verse] to [verse].

[After reading the passage, the deacon/reader says the following:]

Deacon/Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Reading from the Gospel

Priest: Let us stand for the reading of the Gospel of our Lord.

[With right hand extended:]

Priest: Peace be with you all.

Congregation: And with your spirit.

Priest: With reverence, let us listen to the reading of the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, written by St. Matthew/St. Mark/St. Luke/St. John, chapter [chapter number], verses [verse] to [verse].

[After reading the passage, the priest says the following:]

Priest: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Reading the Meditation

5. Silence

6. Confession

7. Prayer of Commitment

8. Creed of the Church

9. Lord's Prayer

10. Benediction

This sample format of the Order of Service tells how a church service should begin during this season. For details, please look into Chapter Five **“Practical Guidelines and Instructions,”** (Pages 35-42) for organizing church service during the Greater Lent Season.

Conclusion

Lent is the most hallowed of seasons, and the most blessed. It's all about the Lord Jesus Christ, His Passion, His suffering and the blood He shed on the Cross. It's all about redemption and salvation, of being saved through suffering.

Whatever we do during these days is intended to carry us closer to our Lord. That is to become more like Him, and to make us aware of how much we ought to love others.

To fulfill God's call and work, we should find new strength to renew our own lives, make serious decisions, find out where we stand in relation with God and what kind of a person God would want us to be. Lent is the best time for this to happen.

Let the Lenten season teach us to become simple and humble and to focus on our

The Seasons of Lent

relationship with God. Let's change. Let's unlearn the wrong we've learned and undo the harm we've dealt others. Let the spirit of Lent free us from the fetters of ego, evil and intellectual arrogance. Let Lent offer us moments of insight and introspection so that we get to renew our lives, pray more, read and meditate, and live true Christian lives.

Let's follow the Lenten Meditation with diligence. If we abide by this decision, this season will see a turning point in our personal lives and help us to live meaningful lives in our community. Let us live comforted in the thought that as each season wanes, we are nearer to Thee Our Lord...nearer to Thee!

