



Introduction to Lent and Ash Wednesday

Lent is upon us once again. We often think of it as a penitential season. But perhaps we might consider it a growing season. Lent is a journey, a process of growth, a time of entering into sacred inner space where we might assess the heights to which we've climbed, the risks we've taken, the shortcomings we've known. It's the season where we spend time looking at the value of growth in our lives and the learnings we have gained.

Lent is a good time to listen to the Holy One, open our minds and hearts and enlarge our capacity to receive. It often goes beyond words...into silence...where we experience the Beloved's call to relationship.

This Lent the WPC office is offering once again six prayer services, one for each week of Lent. We will be using quotes from our newest publication, ***Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice*** as well as our other publications and poems and prayers from ***The Art of Providence***. Use them individually or with local communities or faith sharing groups...the choice is yours.

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

A Short Ash Wednesday Reflection

A Simple Story: Once upon a time a traveler said to one of the disciples, "I have traveled a great distance to listen to the Holy One, but I find the words quite ordinary." And the disciple said, "Don't listen to the words; listen to the message." "And how does one do that?" the traveler asked. "Simple," the disciple said. "Just take hold of the Holy One's sentences and shake them well till all the words drop off. And what's left will set your heart on fire."

Reading: excerpt from WPC book: *Providence and Peace: Maxim of J. Martin Moye*

Rid your hearts of all feelings of bitterness and division. We are to hold onto our belief that all persons are made in the image of God, that all are intrinsically good, and we are to do our best to perceive the goodness in the other. Assumptions, biases, and my/our pained history are set aside so that the goodness I see and the goodness in the other person can meet.

--A. Gerdemann, CDP

Reflection question: In what ways do I want to enlarge my capacity to receive this Lent?

Closing Prayer:

Provident God, bringer of truth, please empty me of whatever impedes the growth of our relationship. Help me recognize and accept your sources for growth in my life. Soften any resistance and help me welcome this time and inner season of growth as a catalyst for my transformation. *Amen*





Lenten Prayer Service Week One

Leader: Provident God, we believe our lives are touched by you, that you want something for us and of us.

All: Give us ears to hear you, eyes to see the tracing of your finger, and hearts quickened by the motions of your Spirit.

Song: (Your selection)

Reading: excerpt from WPC book: *Providence and Peace: Maxim of J. Martin Moyer*

Neither make nor willingly listen to disparaging remarks about your neighbor. Take the part of those absent and do not lightly believe negative reports about them. Faithfulness to these Christian ideals would bring silence to many conversations and certainly shorten many newscasts. A society, small or large, where negative tales are the preponderance of shared information finds that distrust and fear are pervasive. Distrust leaves little place for compromise and cooperation.

--Alice. Gerdemann, CDP

Response: *All That I Am*, a poem by Clare Frances Grueser, CDP+, from *The Art of Providence*

All that I am, all that I have,
All that in future will come to me—
 headaches and heartaches,
 illness and pain,
 born with love, for He first loved me.
 He suffered for me.

Joys and pleasures, delights of Creation,
I find Him in them all as He unfolds them to me.
 Good things and evil things
 I must expect,
 I must discern and choose
 that which is best for me,
 that which conforms to Your will.

My final end, Heaven at last!
Your goodness upholds me.
Your arms enfold me.
I am safe in Your Providence.

--Clare Frances Grueser, CDP+

Pause for silent reflection



Lenten Prayer Service Week One

Reflection Questions

- What are your hopes and dreams for this Lenten journey?
- When have you experienced or witnessed fear and distrust?
- To what areas of growth may God be calling you?

Closing Prayer: adapted from *On Being Providence* by Ruth McGoldrick, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

O God, you call us each day to enter more fully
into the great mystery of your Providence
and to bear with humility and simplicity
the beautiful name of Providence.
Each day of our lives, your loving and provident arms are around us,
guiding and accompanying us on the Way.

Help us to be the caring, creative, and compassionate bearers
of hope and healing to which You have called us.

Today, and each day, may we dedicate ourselves anew
to being the face of Your Providence in our world. *Amen*





Lenten Prayer Service Week Two

Leader: Provident God, we believe our lives are touched by you, that you want something for us and of us.

All: Give us ears to hear you, eyes to see the tracing of your finger, and hearts quickened by the motions of your Spirit.

Song: (Your selection)

Reading: adapted from WPC book: *Providence and Peace: Peace is the Divine Will for the Earth*
The road of reflection on and action to become Providence women and men of peace and justice can be a bumpy one. Rethinking long-held ideas and identifying ways to be peacemakers and justice activists within busy schedules takes time. Issues like hunger, nuclear disarmament, homelessness, immigration, terrorism, war and poverty are major concerns that demand our attention. "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world" are a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel." (World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971)

The words: "peace is the divine will for the earth" (John Martin Moyer) carry the intense meaning that working for peace, personal and global, is a way of Providence.

Along that way, pain and sorrow may be present, but what a privilege it is to be the face of Providence to people in need! If to be a person of Providence, is to be God's loving presence in the hard places, then we are also to find Providence there.
--Alice Gerdemann, CDP

Response: *Door of Providence*, a poem by Michele Bisbey, CDP, from *The Art of Providence*

We dwell in the abundance of God's Providence.
Lured by that Providence,
we open the doors of our heart and our homes.
The door of Providence is double hinged;
an entryway to hospitality,
a thruway to the margins.
So, we walk in gratitude and we risk sharing even our sustenance.
Whether going in
or coming out,
a window candle,
symbol of presence,
lights the way.
The candle in the window of a Providence person
is a promise
of a warm and loving welcome into a circle of friends.

--Michele Bisbey, CDP

Pause for silent reflection



Lenten Prayer Service Week Two

Reflection Questions

- Think about the issues mentioned in the above reading.
What actions on behalf of justice have you taken in your life?

- How and when can we as women and men of Providence be peacemakers?

- When have you experienced the face of Providence in your life?

Closing Prayer: adapted from CDP, Texas, Chapter prayer in WPC book: *The Art of Providence*

Loving God,

thank you for your steadfast care for us.

We confidently ask Your continued blessings on our Lenten journey.

Make us more deeply aware of our presence in You.

Help us understand what we most need to ask You today.

Inspire us to go to the sacred places You want us to travel
as we further the Mission of Jesus.

Empower us with your vision of truth, justice, and peace
as we work to advance your reign.

Help us become sacraments of your Providence in our church and society.

We pray in Jesus' name. *Amen*





Lenten Prayer Service Week Three

Leader: Provident God, we believe our lives are touched by you, that you want something for us and of us.

All: Give us ears to hear you, eyes to see the tracing of your finger, and hearts quickened by the motions of your Spirit.

Song: (Your selection)

Reading: adapted from WPC book: *Providence and Peace: Providence, Peace, and Pot Luck Suppers*
Peace Quest in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, sponsored by the Sisters of Providence there, began with an idea of bringing people together for a potluck supper to promote peace. Over the years the office did many things to promote a culture of peace. Many of their activities were connected to insights offered by Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*. He wrote: "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth...no one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself. An adequate understand of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together."
--Jamie Swift and Pope Francis

Response: *Foundation Day*, a poem by Jeannette Filthaut, SP, adapted from *The Art of Providence*

We are [people] called into a journey,
companions of compassionate care,
living Luke Four with the poor and marginalized,
those most in need:
the orphans, aged, sick, prisoners,
racially different, wounded of society.

Creative people who lead and follow,
people who nurture life in others,
"green" people concerned for Mother Earth
and her well being,
"healing" people whose Providence spirituality of trust
leads others to hope
for their own health and well-being.

People who leads others to trust
that God is with us through it all,
renewing our Spirits, strengthening our courage,
calling us to walk in HOPE with LOVE and GRATITUDE.

--Jeannette Filthaut, SP

Pause for silent reflection



Lenten Prayer Service Week Three

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced potluck suppers to be opportunities to build peace?

- In what ways have you experienced the idea that everything is related and connected?

Closing Prayer: adapted from *Prayer for Confidence* by Cathy Campbell, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

Provident God,
grant me the confidence in your love and care
so, I, too, may not give way to uneasiness about the future,
but place myself gently into the hands of Providence, as
I embrace present and future as evolving mystery.

Grant me that confidence
as I read headlines of chaos and conflict here and around the world,
as I respond to uncertainties in our world
and good health in my life and family.

Strengthen my belief in Providence
as I strive daily to care for the planet,
to minister among those you send me,
to educate and to advocate for justice.

Give me a compassionate heart
as I companion all who rely on me
in illness or infirmity.

Grant me patience as I grope along the path
You trace out for me daily.
Keep me firmly on the way, drawing me ever deeper
toward the reunion awaiting me in your eternal embrace. *Amen*





Lenten Prayer Service Week Four

Leader: Provident God, we believe our lives are touched by you, that you want something for us and of us.

All: Give us ears to hear you, eyes to see the tracing of your finger, and hearts quickened by the motions of your Spirit.

Song: (Your selection)

Reading: excerpt from WPC book: *Providence and Peace: Memos and Mallets*

In reflecting on Providence spirituality, Maria admits struggling with the notion of complete trust. “I have a hard time with ‘abandoning myself’ to Providence, she admits. “I’m too controlling.” At the same time, every element of her life—her marriage, her activism—manifests her belief that “a Provident God takes care of us. Don’t worry—you don’t have to solve everything. God is in charge.” As she ponders the connections between Providence and peace, she observes: “it’s so obvious that the absence of belief causes injustice and violence. We have an obligation to promote peace. In many realms—food, education, water, health—we make policies that leave the poor behind.” She says: “I can’t think of a more alive God than in that process of confronting the abuse of power. Faith and action go hand in hand. There’s a saying: “Look to heaven, but also use your hammer or mallet.” In other words, working for peace is very much a matter of co-creative activity, working with Providence.

--Maria Antonietta Berriozabal/Mary Francine Danis, ACDP

Response: *Come What May*, a poem by Lori Strawn, SPA, from *The Art of Providence*

What lies ahead may be a pebble or a boulder,
slope or sheer drop.

It is not for me to know.

Faith whispers only this:

put one foot out at a time, test the air,
put it down. Repeat.

The light will find you. The floor will hold you. The roof will not collapse.

There is a hand waiting in the dark,
fingers tensing for your touch.
Find it.

--Lori Strawn, SP Associate

Pause for silent reflection



Lenten Prayer Service Week Four

Reflection Questions

- In what ways do you resonate with her struggle for complete trust in God?
- What are some choices for activism have you made?
- In what ways can you and your family/community promote peace?

Closing Prayer: adapted from *Open My Mind and Heart* by Ann Casper, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

O God of Providence, open our minds and hearts to Your daily invitations to transformation, to quiet and alone moments—early hours at home, drives to and from work, late night silences. Open our minds and hearts to the beckoning in nature’s beauty—in darkest night sky, in fresh, pure snowfall, in colorful hues of sunrise and sunset. To chances for growth—a day of prayer, a spiritual retreat, a faith-sharing group. Yes, O God of Providence, open our minds and hearts to your invitation to transform our lives in the midst of the daily and the ordinary. We pray in Jesus’ name. *Amen*





Lenten Prayer Service Week Five

Leader: Provident God, we believe our lives are touched by you, that you want something for us and of us.

All: Give us ears to hear you, eyes to see the tracing of your finger, and hearts quickened by the motions of your Spirit.

Song: (Your selection)

Reading: excerpt from WPC book: *Providence and Peace: Providence Provides Peace*

We know what it is not to have peace: when two family members refuse to speak to each other after the father's will is read; that is not peace. When one refuses to go to church because he or she was offended once by the priest is not peace. Bullying on the playground is not peace. Ruminating over past hurts is not peace. When a nation spends more money on military arms rather than on housing and food, job creation and the environment, that is not peace. Stagnation and refusal to grow, to see from another's perspective and to change is not peace either. So what is peace? ...As a gift of the Spirit, a gift of Providence, peace is both a state inside us and a set of conditions outside us...It is "an active way of living, seeking to resolve conflicts nonviolently and cooperatively respecting the well-being of the earth and all its people."

--Pauline Lally, SP

Response: *God of All Names*, a poem by Annette Seubert, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

God of all names, more names than we can count or imagine,
Your invitation to know you invites us, cajoles us, urges us into the future of your newness.
You are creator, shepherd, compassionate one, source of all life and center of light.
You are birther, transformer, mover, compelling us always to the more.

Mother, Father God, you embrace us. God of love, you are the center of all being.
You are the presence and leaven, the energy of agape love.
You are all around us, breathing in us and among us the Spirit of Life.
You are Ruah and Rahamin. You are Christus and Cosmic Christ.
You are lover, redeemer, healer, comforter, and merciful one.
You bless us with your tender touch and free us from all ills.

You are Mother of the universe, friend and companion. You are our rock and cornerstone.
You are Providence, who rises before the sun. You are liberator, whole maker, maker of peace.
You are Divine Fire, burning intensely in our hearts. You are Mystery, ever ancient, ever new.
God of all names, open our eyes to see you are ONE.

--Annette Seubert, SP

Pause for silent reflection



Lenten Prayer Service Week Five

Reflection Questions

- Do you resonate with the examples of what is not peace? Name others?

- What do you think is a definition of peace?

- What other names do you give God?

Closing Prayer: adapted from *Spirit of Transforming Love* by Mary Kay Nealen, SP,
from *The Art of Providence*

God of all Providence, each day you call us to deeper hope.
You invite us to dreams still undreamed, to visions still becoming, and to carry them forth
in challenging times with limited resources.

Awaken in us creative, energizing and collaborative ways to be peacemakers, to be a community of healers.

We hold trust, confidence, and hope that your Providence will see us through.

Awaken in us a brighter vision that our Providence mission, to show forth your love and
compassion in service to the poor, will always be sacred to us, with peace and hope for all.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. *Amen*





Lenten Prayer Service Week Six

Leader: Provident God, we believe our lives are touched by you, that you want something for us and of us.

All: Give us ears to hear you, eyes to see the tracing of your finger, and hearts quickened by the motions of your Spirit.

Song: (Your selection)

Reading: excerpt from WPC book: *Providence and Peace, Providence Spirituality and Justice*

The relationship between Providence and peace, in my way of thinking, is justice. Some people might see peace merely as an end to war, but I see it in terms of justice, in creating relationships and finding solutions to problems in a non-violent way. God truly is the God of justice—no justice, no peace—that’s the key component. We need to look underneath the problem and the violence. However, sometimes we think of the violence solely as the throwing of rocks or burning of stores. In my mind, the bigger violence is the institutional violence of systemic racism—the way the courts operate, lack of jobs that pay a living wage, police practices, housing, etc. That is the “triggering” violence. That has to be challenged and dealt with; otherwise, there will never be peace. It is our time now to do what we can do, to use our God-given abilities to point out the injustices and act to bring change in our times. The world is in desperate need of that providential love and care.

--Kathleen McGinnis/Barbara McMullen, CDP

Response: *Providence Beckons*, a poem by Lucy Bethel, SP, from *The Art of Providence*

What is the future to which Providence beckons?

The past yet to be written!

The present not yet come to be!

A moment none of us are sure of, and, yet,
a moment we will all need to see.

A time of which no one is certain!

A time that calls us to be more than we already are!

A time we know will come and change us.

A time that moves us forward, that’s for sure!

We cannot make it happen, nor prevent it, even if we try.

We cannot avoid it, walk away, refuse it.

It beckons us from birth, through life, until we die.

A time to hope for something!

A time to dream of possibilities!

A time to watch, and wait, and listen.

A time of not only all that was and is, but all that yet will be.

Let’s not be in dread of it!

Let’s not fear that great unknown!

Let’s anticipate it, embrace its coming.

Let’s step out and welcome our new home!

--Lucy Bethel, SP

Pause for silent reflection



Lenten Prayer Service Week Six

Reflection Questions

- How do you see the connection between Providence, peace, and justice in our current times?
- What is one social issue that you feel passionately about and what are you willing to do to bring it about for a more peace-filled world.
- As we near the end of Lent, how has your journey been?

Closing Prayer: adapted from CDP, Texas, Chapter Prayer in WPC book: *The Art of Providence*

What are you asking of us now, Provident God?
Where do you wish to take us at this time?
How shall we see the path as our eyes grow dim?
Where shall we get our courage for all that lies ahead?

Tell us, Provident God, who are we to be for you now?

Bless us with your eyes that we may see those who need us as you see them.
Bless us with your heart that we have your compassion for those who suffer.
Bless us with the courage to believe that your strength is enough for us.
Bless us with trusting hearts to depend only on your Providence.

Tell us, Provident God, who are we to be for you now? *Amen*

