Preparing for Lent: A Synod Prayer Experience

INTRODUCTION

Lent is a time when we prepare as a faith community to meet the risen Christ at Easter. It is a time for conversion, where we acknowledge and turn away from whatever keeps us from living the Gospel, a time to remind ourselves that we are called to lives rooted in right relationship with God and neighbor. As we prepare to meet Christ in his resurrected glory, we pray for a change of heart towards greater love of God and neighbor; we fast from self-indulgence and indifference to the poor and suffering; and finally, we share our food, our wealth and our time with others in need. Over these 40 days, may the Holy Spirit give us the strength to act justly, the courage to love tenderly and the faith to walk humbly with our God, that we might rejoice in the triumph of God’s justice in Jesus at Easter.

Explanation of the Synod

Like many of the words that we use in our tradition, Synod is an ancient Greek word that means assembling to determine the path forward. Pope Francis is inviting the Church to gather and to listen to each and every Catholic to find the Church’s path forward at this time in our history. During adoration today, we will take time in prayer to ready our hearts with answers to the Pope’s questions about our church and fully open ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

OPENING SONG: (Sugg. Lift High the Cross)

OPENING PRAYER

Prayer of the Synod on Synodality

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

READING : (JOEL 2:12-18)

A reading from the book of the prophet Joel:

“Yet even now,” says the Lord,  
    “return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
and rend your hearts and not your garments.”  
Return to the Lord, your God,  
    for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
    and repents of evil.

Who knows whether he will not turn and repent,  
    and leave a blessing behind him,  
a cereal offering and a drink offering  
    for the Lord, your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
    sanctify a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;

gather the people.  
Sanctify the congregation;  
    assemble the elders;  
gather the children,  
    even nursing infants.  
Let the bridegroom leave his room,  
    and the bride her chamber.

Between the vestibule and the altar  
    let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep  
and say, “Spare thy people, O Lord,  
    and make not thy heritage a reproach,  
    a byword among the nations.  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
    ‘Where is their God?’”

**God’s Response and Promise**

Then the Lord became jealous for his land,  
    and had pity on his people.

(Pause) The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Psalm 51)

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned. And done what is evil in your sight.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And put a new and right spirit with in me. Do not cast me away from your presence, And do not take your holy spirit from me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, And sustain in me a willing spirit. O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth will declare your praise.

GOSPEL (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18) A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to the disciples, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show other that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash you face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

(Pause) The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

***Take a moment to allow the Holy Spirit to prompt an awareness of the aspects in the church’s life and where His gentle breath needs to breath in her.***

*(At this time, hand out or display a power point of the question, allow everyone to spend time pondering the questions)*

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray: Lord, you know how much our church needs you and depends on you. You know our weakness and our faults. We put all our confidence in your love and mercy in our daily actions. We hope to learn to trust more in your power, your promise, and your grace. Lord, we wish to start this season of Lent with a sincere desire to grow in love, preparing ourselves worthily to celebrate the mysteries of your passion, death and resurrection. We make this prayer to you in his name. Amen.

CLOSING SONG: (Sugg. Gather the People or Turn to Me)

Thank you for coming. Please join us in the Hall for fellowship and small group conversation.