**PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK** Psalm 31:2-3, 1, 5, 9, 16

Be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to | save me.*
For You are my rock and my | fortress.
Therefore, for Your | name’s sake,*
lead me and | guide me.
In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never | be ashamed:*
deliver me in Your | righteousness.
Into Your hand I commit my | spirit:*
You have redeemed me, O Lord | God of truth.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in | trouble:* my eye wastes a | way with grief.
Make Your face shine upon Your | servant;*
save me for Your | mercies’ sake.

**BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:**
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**PRAY THE LORD’S PRAYER**
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**SAY THE APOSTLES’ CREED**
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER**

*Morning.* I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

*Evening.* I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.
THEME OF THE WEEK: The Lord’s Call to Follow Him

As we move into Lent proper, God’s Word reminds us this week of why Jesus went to Jerusalem: to die on the cross and be resurrected three days later. Even those closest to Jesus did not understand this at first. God gives to His Church the Holy Spirit so that we may, through the preaching of the Apostles, understand these things rightly. Jesus died for sinners, suffering the punishment that is ours by our many sins. Despite the fact that we were at enmity with God, He has shown us love by delivering His body over to death for us. In this way, He prepares imperishable treasures for us in His kingdom, which are ours, even now, in Holy Baptism.

SCRIEPTURE: Luke 18:31-43: The Seeing are Blind, but the Blind See

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem in order to suffer and die, He makes His third passion prediction stating just that. But even after hearing this three times the disciples still don’t understand. It appears that God Himself hid the meaning from them, in order for Jesus to be completely rejected on His way to the cross. Seeing, they do not see. Ironically, Jesus encounters blind Bartimaeus, who can see Jesus for who He really is: the Son of David—Israel’s Messiah as foretold by the prophets. O Lord, grant us, who are so blinded by our sin, to behold Your Son, Jesus Christ, as our true light and Savior from every trouble and need. Amen.

SCRIEPTURE: Psalm 26: Wash Me in Righteousness

Psalm 26 is a prophecy given to David of the Christ. We know from the Scriptures that David did not walk in integrity before the Lord. Only Christ can pray this Psalm and mean it. He alone has a heart that can stand up to the Lord’s judgments, and He alone walks after the Lord in perfect faithfulness. On the other hand, David (and we sinners, too) may pray this psalm, realizing that we have been washed in the innocence of Christ in Baptism. Through this washing of regeneration, God gives us His Holy Spirit, that we might walk in newness of life, avoiding the snare of sin laid before us. O Lord, continually cleanse us in the innocent blood of Christ, that we may tell all of Your wondrous deeds. Amen.

SCRIEPTURE: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13: What is love?

Young couples in love often pick this reading for their wedding, thinking it describes the love they have for one another. And yet, this passage describes the love God has for us in His Son, Jesus Christ, who endured all things as we read on Sunday in order that we would not perish eternally. This love of God comes to us through the Word of God, which gives us the Truth incarnate—Jesus Christ. The Scriptures all testify to Him, who is God’s love come down to earth to rescue us from sin and death. O Lord, grant us to know You as You have revealed Yourself to us in Your Word. Amen.

SCRIEPTURE: Matthew 6:16-21: Ash Wednesday

Today marks the beginning of Lent, which is historically a period of fasting for Christians. Much of what it means to truly fast is lost on us moderns, as we lament giving up soda or chocolate. The real question, though, ought to be, “Why fast at all?” With these words, Jesus commends fasting to us as a salutary practice—almost as if He expects us to do so. This fasting should be done with an eye toward disciplining the flesh. We do not live by bread alone, but by the Word that proceeds from God. We are to seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and we may do so confidently, knowing that He will provide us with what we need in both body and soul. O Lord, teach us to discipline our bodies that sin may not reign in our members. Amen.

SCRIEPTURE: John 12:23-36: Death and Resurrection

Jesus must be lifted up on the cross. It is a Divine necessity. By His death, He brings life. What is sown in weakness is raised in power and glory. We get such a glimpse of this every time a child is baptized. That child, so helpless, is joined to the death of Jesus. The ruler of this world is cast out as the devil, his works, and his ways are renounced and must give way to the work of the Holy Spirit. There, in the font, Christ makes sons of darkness into sons of light, who are buried with Him and will be raised with Him on the last day. O Lord, keep us in the covenant of our Baptism, that we may face the evils of sin and death without fear. Amen.

SCRIEPTURE: 1 Peter 3:18-22: Baptized into Christ’s Righteousness

At Baptism, we are clothed with Christ, the very righteousness of God. God has promised here that Baptism saves us, and so it does. No matter how much the devil, the world, and our sinful nature would like to get around these words, they cannot. This means that Baptism must be God’s work, and not ours, because our works do not save. This Baptism gives us a good conscience before God, which means that every sin that plagues us, especially those ones the devil parades in front of us, are forgiven. Christ died for them, and that death is subjected to His reign. O Lord, even as You drowned wicked men in the flood, so also You saved Noah and his family. In the waters of Baptism, drown our Old Adam and save us by Your grace. Amen.

SCRIEPTURE: Psalm 27: Evildoers Assail Me

Tomorrow, the Church begins the season of Lent and continues her annual march to the cross. We will hear how Satan assailed Christ in the wilderness, even as he assailed Adam in the Garden and Israel in the wilderness—even as he assails us today. But Christ is our conquering Lord. He defeated the devil at the temptation by the power of His Word and at the cross by the blood He shed for you. Even though this mighty foe is encamped against us, Christ is our mighty fortress who holds the field forever. The kingdom ours remaineth. O Lord, hide me in Your shelter and conceal me under the cover of Your tent, that we may sing Your praises in the land of the living. Amen.