

Lenten Worship Resources for 2012 by the Stillspeaking Writers' Group

Prayers of Invocation

Leader: Gracious God, we can get lost in a sea of "shoulds" during Lent. Some people want us to give something up. Some people tell us to take something on instead. In this Lenten season of reflection,

People: Open our hearts to your will.

Leader: As the cold of the winter months gives way to the glow of spring, help us to notice the new life in your world, great Creator. In this Lenten season of reflection,

People: Open our hearts to your will.

Leader: As we search our hearts for what we have done wrong, or the good we have left undone, let your wisdom follow. In this Lenten season of reflection,

People: Open our hearts to your will.

Leader: As we prepare ourselves for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, sweep out the dust that clogs our spirits. Clean out the gutters of our hearts. Open up the windows to bring in the air of God, so that in the wind of the Holy Spirit our house will be made clean. In this Lenten season of reflection,

People: Open our hearts to your will.

Lillian Daniel

We're edgy, God. Patient humility is for the monks. Repentance is for the bad people. Spirit of wisdom, guide us. Spirit of openness, change us. Spirit of truth, lead us. Draw us closer to you and to one another. As we worship you, make us patient and humble after all—and even repentant—glad that your Spirit wants to break out in us all.

William C. Green

Holy One, you who have set the rainbow in the clouds as a reminder, a kind of post-it note unto yourself, that you may remember your promises to all creation. How much more so, then, do we need to be reminded of your steady purposes, your redemptive resolve, and your power to heal and make new. Remember us, we pray, turn to us now, for we call upon you. Come, fill our hearts and our worship, that we may truly know you and so remember who and whose we really are. Amen.

Anthony B. Robinson

Prayers of Confession

A broken heart! A troubled mind! The hard questions we face! This is what you want us to bring you, God. Instead we're given to faith that looks to you for escape. You know how we'd rather avoid conflict than face it head-on. We want the certainty of answers more than the assurance of your presence. You see how unprepared we are for the new questions that await us. Forgive the way we turn our backs on you and your guidance amid all that makes us anxious. Forgive us for neglecting your promise of new life in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

William C. Green

Lord God, on this day when we hear again of Christ's light-filled baptism and of his dark days of wilderness temptation, we confess we prefer the high moments and would just as soon Christian faith did not entail the hard ones. We confess that we want to walk with you to the light-filled, holy places but would rather avoid the dark and desolate places. We are eager to accompany you to the points of new beginning but not so eager to go with you to the end of our rope, to where our own resources have run out. You understand us, O God, you know our weakness, and that is why you have gone before us and walk beside us. We thank you, O God, that as we are tested and tempted on account of our faith, we know that there is one, even Jesus, who has gone before us and who walks beside us.

Anthony B. Robinson

This is not going well, God.
If you had just made us perfect
if you had just made us like Jesus:
pure, consecrated only to you,
things might be different.
Instead, we are frail and fickle.
We are beset and besotted
by everything that is shiny, or easy, or new.
Instead, we have consecrated ourselves
only to what feels good,
and, God, it is not going well.
So, though it makes us feel like a friend
who's always asking to borrow money or the car,
could you help us out a little?
Would you be perfect where we're not?
Would you give us a future?
Would you help us remember
how much we need you
how much we love you
how much we want you?
This is not going well, God.
So would you help us out just a little,
and forgive us?

Quinn G. Caldwell

Assurances of Pardon

Is God foolish? Even knowing all our ways, God smiles. What we want to keep hidden is understood. What we can't forgive God does. That's not foolishness: it's God. Let's get ready and open our hearts all over again to the surprise of this grace.

William C. Green

Hear the good news, from the Letter to the Hebrews: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, approach the throne of grace with boldness, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Anthony B. Robinson

You guys, the news doesn't get much better than this: God loves you so much that there's nothing in heaven or on earth that could keep you apart. God was ready to forgive your sins before you made them; God missed you long before you missed him. God was ready to welcome you home before you even turned. In Jesus Christ, you are new, and holy, shining, and true, Your sins are forgiven, Tomorrow will not be the same as yesterday! Amen.

Quinn G. Caldwell

Calls to Worship

(Drawing on Psalm 130:5-6)

One: Come, Lord Jesus. Trip us up when we'd rather get you to help us run our own show.

Many: I wait for the Lord, my soul waits.

One: Come, Lord Jesus. Make us skeptical of the skepticism that looks for nothing but improvement in our customary performance.

Many: I wait for the Lord, and in the Lord's word I hope.

One: Come, Lord Jesus. We are pretty good actors, but our lines are often hollow.

Many: We wait for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning.

Let us worship the Lord!

William C. Green

One: To you, O God, we lift up our souls.

Many: In you, O God, we trust;

One: Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

Many: Let the treacherous be ashamed.

One: Make us to know your ways, O God;

Many: Teach us your paths.

One: Lead us in your truth, and teach us,

Many: For you are the God of our salvation.

One: It is for you we wait.

Anthony B. Robinson

(for Maundy Thursday)

One: He comes! He comes! In the name of the Lord, he comes!

Many: With palms, with cheers, with brimming hearts, we come to see.

One: He's here! Here in our city, here in our midst!

**Many: Poor and glorious, Ragged
and majestic.**

One: Despised by the powerful, Beloved
of God.

**Many: Surprising grace, glorious,
incongruous, vision of God on a
colt.**

One: We come! We come! In the name of the Lord, we come!

**Many: With palms, with cheers, with brimming hearts, we come to see. Glorious, incongruous,
Ragged and majestic, We gather to worship the God in our midst.**

One: Let us pray:

**Many: Gracious God, we seek to know and to worship you among the palm-bearing crowds
today. We have been the Maundy Thursday crowds, the Good Friday crowds. We will
be again. And we ask forgiveness for that. But today, today, we welcome your coming
with joy, with shouts, with palms and elation. Come to us, God, for we will worship you
today! In Jesus' holy name, Amen.**

Quinn G. Caldwell

(for Good Friday)

One: We gather in this darkest day of our year to remember what our world did to Jesus. You who call upon the name of the Christ, are you prepared to walk with him to the cross?

Many: By the grace of God, we are!

One: Are you willing to look for yourself among those that, through action or inaction, crucified him?

Many: By the grace of God, we are!

One: Are you willing to look for yourself among those that succored him?

Many: By the grace of God, we are!

One: And will you look around you, searching for the crucified one among your brothers and sisters?

Many: By the grace of God, we will.

One: Then let us worship God in the darkness!

Many: By the grace of almighty God, we will walk with Christ this day!

Quinn G. Caldwell

Offertory Prayers

When I let go of my money to the basket this morning let me do so with the joy underneath the sorrow of Lent. Remind me of how Jesus guaranteed that we could have what we can let go of. And let me really let go in order to really have. Let my gift not be a manipulation of relinquishment but something that makes me empty enough of the old to be filled by the new. First we jump, and then we get our wings! Help me to jump and to fly. In the name of your feasting and crucified Son, Amen.

Donna Schaper

Shouldn't we give more than we do? But God, you're always making a big deal out of whatever we give. We praise you for doing it again and blessing these offerings. By your grace we'll grow as we give in the spirit of Jesus' sacrifice for us all. Amen.

William C. Green

In offering these gifts, it is ourselves we offer to you our God. As Christ died and was raised from the dead, so in our every act of true generosity and sharing, you win a victory over death and fear, and we are made alive in the spirit. To you be the glory, amen.

Anthony B. Robinson

O gracious God, to you, these gifts,
With thanks we dedicate
And ask that by your Spirit
Their deployment you dictate:
To work salvation, mercy, hope
This mortal coil transform.
That through our hope in our dear Christ,
On Earth your realm be born.
Guide us in wise use and bold, Of this, our wealth, free-given
That we, in joy, may say that we For you alone have striven. Amen.

Quinn G. Caldwell

Benedictions

May the grace of God disturb us, the power of God overwhelm us, and the holy Spirit split open our hearts to receive the deepest assurance made ours in Jesus. Amen.

William C. Green

(from *The New Century Hymnal*, by Howard Moody)

“May you love God so much that you love nothing else too much; May you fear God enough that you need fear nothing else at all. Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.”

And now unto all of you who are the Living Word,
More precious than print, more sacred than Scripture,
Walk in humility and act in mercy
That all may see the Spirit, whose image you bear.