



Little Way
Lent
Guide

*Simple spiritual practices to
deepen your Lenten journey*

Little Way Chapel

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Welcome to Little Way Chapel



Whether you are brand new to Lent, or have been observing it for years, I hope you will find this guide a steady companion. In these pages, you will learn more about the history of our faith, and about the spiritual practices that have sustained God's people for over two millennia. But more importantly, you will be invited to actually *do* them, drawing you into deeper communion with the risen Lord. But before we can share with Christ in his resurrection, we must join him in his death. This guide is a 40 day journey with Jesus through the wilderness and to the cross. The daily practices are simple enough for all ages to be consistent, yet substantial enough to draw you into the heart of God. May you find Jesus there this Lent.

In Christ,

Alissa Case

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History of Lent

Lent is a season of 40 days (46 including Sundays) leading up to Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday and concluding on Holy Saturday. (Sundays are considered "feast days" when fasts can be broken to celebrate the Sabbath.) During these 40 days, Christians around the world dedicate themselves to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, imitating Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, where he fasted and was tempted by Satan. It is a season for repentance, self-denial, and remembering our mortality. Though the origins of Lent are not entirely certain, the forty-day fast prior to Easter was already a well-established custom by 325 AD, as is evident from the fact that the canons of the Council of Nicaea reference it as common practice.

Three Pillars of Lent

Traditionally, the church has turned her attention to three spiritual practices during Lent: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving (serving others). These practices are based on Jesus' teachings in Matthew 6:1-18, where he instructs his followers to pray, fast and give to the poor, but to do it all in secret, unlike the hypocrites who do it publicly, for show.

This guide follows these three traditional Lenten spiritual practices, assigning one practice each day. Each activity has one of the labels below to indicate the practice.



Pray



Fast



Give

Pray: The majority of prayers in this guide come from Scripture itself, specifically the penitential Psalms, or the writings of the early Church fathers. Many of them are structured as "breath prayers." This is an ancient form of prayer that allows you to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). Simply choose two lines to meditate on, inhaling with the first and exhaling with the second. The first record we have of Scripture being used to pray in this way is with what is called "The Jesus Prayer" in Luke 18:38: "Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of God, Have mercy on me." Breath prayers were in wide-spread use by the 7th century with St. John Climacus, and by the 13th century had become a central prayer practice for Eastern Christians. Not only do breath prayers allow one to meditate on God's word, but they have the very important benefit of slowing us down, and physically calming our nervous systems with deep inhales and exhales. If you can teach your child in times of stress, anger, or sadness to 1) Take deep breaths, and 2) Turn to God, you will be giving them a gift they will carry with them their entire lives. Prints of these prayers are provided at the back of the guide to display on the day they are assigned.

Fast: Teaching children to fast can feel daunting in the diet-culture, image-obsessed world we live in, but it is not impossible! This guide teaches children about fasting by starting them early and in small increments. One thing at a time, one day at a time, every couple days. And most importantly: it encourages you to connect your fast to Jesus' own fast in the desert.

Almsgiving: Almsgiving often gets reduced to sweet "acts of kindness." This does a disservice to our children and the people whom we serve. When Jesus talks about almsgiving, he talks about giving *everything we have* to the poor. Almsgiving is about teaching our children to be more than kind, to do more than smile at a stranger (though those are important!). It is about teaching them to serve Jesus in one another, to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before our God (Micah 6:8).

Sundays are a "mini-Easter", when we rest from these practices to celebrate the risen Lord and keep Sabbath.

During Holy Week, the practices are loosely tied to the events of Jesus' life during that final week before his death and resurrection.

How to use this guide

The Little Way Lenten Guide is designed to be cut into squares and stacked as a deck of cards for the dining table, bedroom nightstand, or wherever you intend to use them. They may also be hung on a string with clothespins and taken down a day at a time as a countdown towards Easter.

If your family can manage it, the best time to review these cards is in the morning, leaving the entire day to practice the spiritual exercise. Dinner or bedtime is a great time to check-in and see how everyone fulfilled the activity and what they may have noticed while doing it. Of course, this isn't possible for all families, so find what works for you, and show yourself and your family grace when it does not always go according to plan.

Some activities have an asterisk, which means there is further explanation in the Daily Notes section at the back. Blank cards are also provided at the back if you would like to swap out or customize a few of the days.

To introduce this guide and the three Lenten spiritual practices to your children, you will find a short children's lesson on page 10.

Before Lent Begins

Shrove Tuesday

The day before Ash Wednesday goes by many names: Shrove Tuesday, Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras, and Pancake Day. The point of each is the same: a giant party before the season of fasting begins!

Shrove Tuesday: Comes from the Anglo-Saxon word, "shriven", which means to be absolved from sin, because Christians would (and still do) go to confession the day before Lent began.

Pancake Tuesday: Feasting on pancakes the night before Ash Wednesday dates back to 16th century Britain when Christians would make pancakes to get rid of all the sugar, eggs, butter, and indulgent foods before fasting.

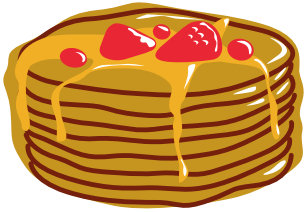
Fat Tuesday: In the same vein as Pancake Tuesday, it is the last night of eating "fatty" foods for a while.

Mardi Gras: Simply means "Fat Tuesday" in French! The customs of Mardi Gras celebrations migrated from France to New Orleans in the 1700's and have taken on a life of their own.

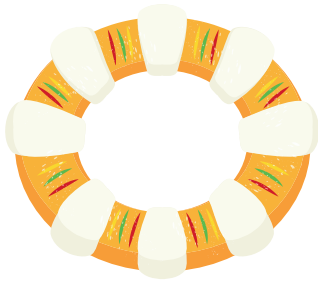
Whatever you call it, don't miss the opportunity to celebrate with friends and family to mark the end of one church season and the beginning of the next. Here are four ways to join the festivities:

Before Lent Begins

Shrove Tuesday



Pancakes for Dinner: Serve pancakes for dinner--a win with your children, and an easy meal for you to make! Go all out with toppings, and end the night with a pancake relay race: two teams with pancake on a pan racing around the house!



King Cake: King Cake is often associated with the magi's arrival on Epiphany, but in New Orleans, it has become a Mardi Gras tradition complete with a baby Jesus in the cake. For an easy version, use two cans of Pillsbury Flaky Cinnamon Rolls with Buttercream Icing (important to use this exact kind). Arrange cinnamon rolls in a circle and press down on the tops to flatten. Bake according to directions. Top with icing, and purple, green, and yellow sprinkles. Plastic baby Jesus inside optional!

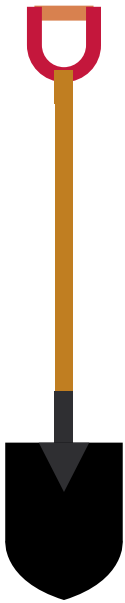


Burning Palms: Did you know that the ashes for Ash Wednesday are made by burning the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday? How fitting is it that the palms used to hail Jesus into Jerusalem to his death are the ashes used to remind us of our own mortality? If you have palms from last year's Palm Sunday service (many churches will weave them into crosses for folks to hang at home throughout the year), now is the time to dispose of them and a festive bonfire is the perfect way to do it!

Before Lent Begins

Shrove Tuesday

Burying the Alleluia: “Alleluia” is an exclamation that means “Praise the Lord!” and is used throughout the Psalms as a shout of joy. Because Lent is a penitential season, one of somberness, the Church omits Alleluia from the liturgy during this 40 day period. We “fast the Alleluia” so to speak. The fast is broken with the opening words of the Easter liturgy on Easter morning: “Alleluia! Christ is risen!”



One way to mark this turn in seasons and change in liturgy is by symbolically “burying the Alleluia” on Shrove Tuesday. This is done by rolling up a banner that reads Alleluia and placing it in a box and physically burying it in the ground, or by simply keeping it hidden or veiled. I love the visual reminder of placing it in a box and burying it in the ground as we turn towards Lent, a time when we consider this very same fate for ourselves, and when we are especially mindful of burying our sins.

On page 7, you will find an Alleluia coloring sheet, and a liturgy for burying the Alleluia on page 8.



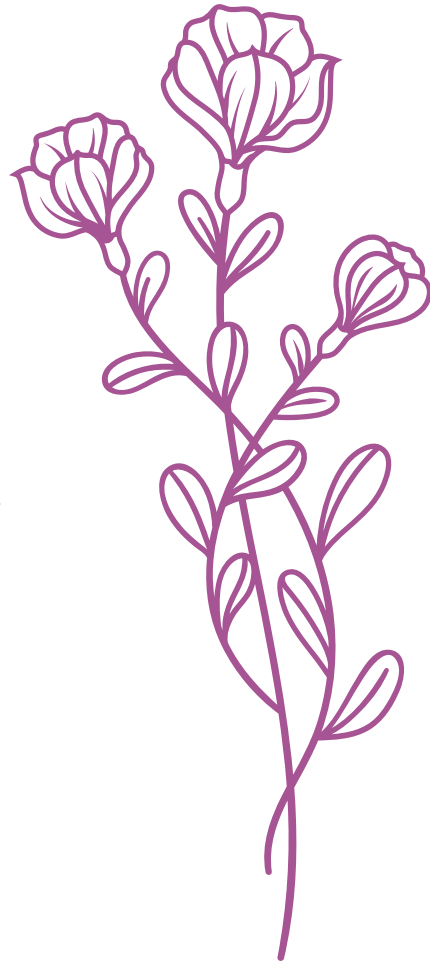
A Liturgy for Burying the Alleluia

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Reader: Psalm 150

Alleluia! Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Alleluia! Praise the Lord!



Leader: Lent is a somber time, a period of 40 days when we walk with Jesus in the wilderness, remembering our mortality and putting to death the sin we have come to hold so dearly. This is not an easy or pleasant thing to do. But we know that when we walk with Jesus, we become more like him. And so, it is right that for this season, we say goodbye to the Alleluia—a shout of happiness—and put it away until we return again to our Easter joy.

The banner is rolled or folded up while singing the hymn below or another appropriate Alleluia song.

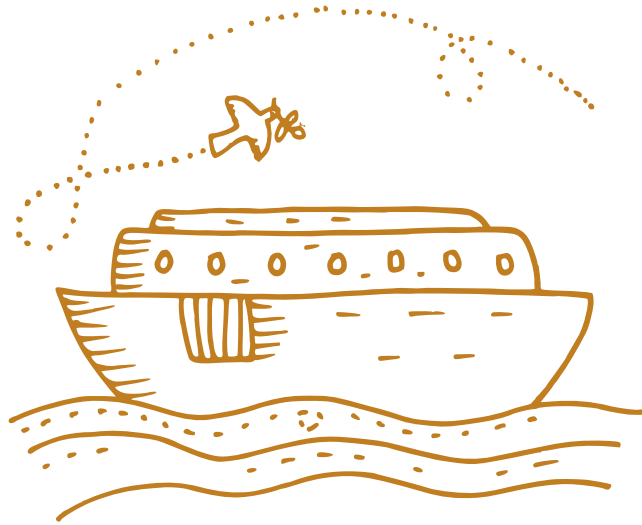
Sing: “Praise Ye the Lord”
Allelu, allelu, allelu, alleluia!
Praise ye the Lord!
Allelu, allelu, allelu, alleluia!
Praise ye the Lord!
Praise ye the Lord, Alleluia!
Praise ye the Lord, Alleluia!
Praise ye the Lord, Alleluia!
Praise ye the Lord!

Leader: Almighty God, we give you thanks for this shout of joy you have placed in our hearts. As we bury this banner, we pray that you will bury our sins with it, making us more like your Son this Lenten season. Amen

Pray, Fast, Give:

A Children's Introduction to Lent

After Jesus was baptized, he followed the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. He stayed there for forty days and forty nights. Like Moses on the mountain. Like Noah in the ark.



Like the Israelites, who spent 40 years in the desert. Like them, Jesus wanted to come close to God. In the wilderness, there is no one and nothing, except for God. Not even food. So Jesus fasted. He ate nothing. Not one crumb of bread. Not one grain of salt. And he prayed. Jesus talked to his Father, and he listened, too.

But Jesus wasn't the only one in the wilderness. The devil was there too. The devil tempted Jesus to eat food. Just like the serpent tempted Adam and Eve to eat the fruit in the garden. And he tempted Jesus to turn away from God.

But Jesus didn't turn away. He didn't eat like Adam and Eve had done. Instead, Jesus came close to God. You see, Jesus was getting ready because he knew that when he left the wilderness, he would have big work to do. He would need to feed the hungry, and heal the sick, and tell everyone about the the kingdom of God. And he also knew that after he did all this, he was going to die.

Pray, Fast, Give:

A Children's Introduction to Lent

A long time ago, the church set aside 40 days for us to come close to God, too. We call it Lent. During Lent, we are all on a journey with Jesus in the wilderness. We are all getting ready for Jesus' death and resurrection.

There are three ways that we can come close to God during Lent.



[Lay down prayer card.] Jesus said we should pray, that we should talk to God and listen.



[Lay down fast card.] Jesus said we should fast, give up something important to us for a time.



[Lay down almsgiving card.] Jesus said that we should give. Give our time, give our money, give our love, give our things.

For the next 40 days, we will pray, we will fast, we will give. Each day, we will pick one of these cards, and come close to God as we do them. We will walk with Jesus through the wilderness, so that we can celebrate with him in his resurrection.



February 14

Today is Ash Wednesday.
Go to church for the
imposition of ashes.*



February 15

Make a donation jar for loose
change and offerings to collect
during Lent. Select an
organization to give it to, and
brainstorm ways to fill the jar.*



February 16

We will be fasting from meat
every Friday during Lent,
remembering Christ's
sacrifice on Good Friday.*



February 17

During Lent we remember our
mortality. Pray for someone
who has died and/or the loved
ones they have left behind.*



February 18

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



February 19

During Lent we remember that we
are dust. Bless your family by
spending five minutes sweeping or
dusting your home today. Remember
that God made humankind from
dust and called us good!



February 20

Fast from screens today
(except when necessary for
work or school).



February 21

Lent is a season of penitence.
Read penitential Psalm 51 and
pray, "Create in me a clean
heart, O God, and renew a
right spirit within me."*



February 22

Read Matthew 25:35-40
and make "Blessing Bags"
to give to the homeless
during Lent.*



February 23

Abstain from meat today,
remembering Christ's
sacrifice on Good Friday.



February 24

Lent is a time of repentance
from our sins. Pray a prayer,
or write a letter of
confession.*



February 25

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



February 26

Make the sign of the cross each time you wash your hands today and pray, "Lord, help me to follow you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*"



February 27

Drink only water today. Reflect on Jesus' words from the cross, "I thirst."



February 28

Give your time today. Ask someone, "How can I help?"



February 29

Pray the Jesus Prayer when you wash your hands: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."*



March 1

Abstain from meat today, remembering Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday.



March 2

Give thanks today. Write a "thank you" note to someone in your life: a teacher, coach, pastor, or neighbor.



March 3

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



March 4

Pray St. Augustine's "Night
Prayer" from the *Liturgy of
the Hours* before bed.*



March 5

Fast from sweets today.



March 6

Give someone a compliment.
For a challenge, compliment
everyone you talk to!



March 7

Go on a prayer walk outside,
remembering how Jesus prayed
in the wilderness for 40 days.*



March 8

Abstain from meat today,
remembering Christ's
sacrifice on Good Friday.



March 9

Go through your book collection to donate to your local library or shelter.



March 10

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



March 11

Read Psalm 31:1-5, and pray, "Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God."*



March 12

Care for God's creation today by cutting down on waste. Use reusable or recyclable products whenever you can.



March 13

Tell each person at the dinner table something you love about them.



March 14

Read Matt 5:44 and pray for someone who has wronged you.



March 15

Abstain from meat today, remembering Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday.



March 16

Cook dinner or bake a St. Patrick's Day treat for another family or individual to deliver tomorrow.*



March 17

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate, and rest.



March 18

Pick a bouquet of new flowers springing up as a sign of the resurrection to come, and give them to a neighbor.



March 19

Fast from "secular" music today. Instead, enjoy hymns and songs of praise.



March 20

Read John 17:20-23 and pray for the unity of the Church, using Jesus' prayer from the night he was betrayed: That we may be one just as he and the Father are one.



March 21

Write an Easter card for a friend, family member, or neighbor. Mail it today to make sure it arrives on time.



March 22

Abstain from meat today, remembering Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday.



March 23

Pray for the people or charity you've been collecting money for this Lent.



March 24

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. Attend church, celebrate, and rest.



March 25

Today is Holy Monday, the day Jesus cleared the Temple courts. Clear out your home of excess items to donate.*



March 26

Today is Holy Tuesday, the day Mary poured perfume on Jesus' feet. Pray an adoration prayer each time you wash your hands today.*



March 27

Today is Holy Wednesday, the day Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Send the money you've been collecting during Lent to your chosen person or organization.



March 28

Today is Maundy Thursday, the day Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Wash one another's feet after dinner.*



March 29

Today is Good Friday. Attend church and/or pray the Stations of the Cross.* Abstain from meat.



March 30

Today is Holy Saturday. Jesus is in the tomb. Read Matt 28:1-10 this evening and pray this ancient breath prayer: "Through the cross, to the light."*



March 31

Today is Easter Sunday. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Celebrate and feast.

daily notes

February 14: At an Ash Wednesday service, the priest or pastor will place ashes on your forehead, recalling God's curse in Genesis 3: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." It is a call to remember our mortality and fallenness as we begin the Lenten season. If you do not attend a church that offers this type of service or cannot attend due to Covid restrictions, consider reading Genesis 3 as a family and repeating, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return" to one another.

February 15: Help your children think through a cause or group they are passionate about and raise money for it this Lent. We are living in a primarily cashless world, so you may need to get creative about how you will collect "spare coins." A few ideas:

- Set aside money out of weekly allowance
- Put the jar in front of the TV and everyone in the house has to pay a quarter to use the screen
- Make a list of chores for children to do to earn money for the jar. Make a goal to do a chore a day.
- Collect soda cans and return them to recycling center

February 16: It is traditional to abstain from meat every Friday during Lent, especially on Good Friday. This sacrifice is a way of remembering and identifying with Jesus in his sacrifice on the cross.

February 17: During Lent, we reflect on our own mortality--that our days are numbered, and no one knows the "day or the hour" when we will be called home to Heaven. Part of facing our mortality, is grieving the loss of those who have died. Depending on your tradition, you may not be comfortable with praying *for* the departed. Instead, you can thank God for their witness and pray for their loved ones left behind. You might also try this breath prayer for the departed:

Inhale: Rest in peace

Exhale: Rise in glory

February 21: There are seven penitential psalms in the Psalter: Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. These psalms are confessions of sin, and are traditionally prayed during Lent. Several will be included in this guide. I encourage you to use the following breath prayer for Psalm 51, which can be prayed throughout the day as you remember. Some find it easier to remember by praying whenever washing hands.

Inhale: Create in me a clean heart

Exhale: Renew a right spirit in me

February 22: "Blessing Bags" can be kept in the car and given out to homeless people as you encounter someone in need. Suggestions for what to include are granola bars, bottled water, band aids, nail clippers, socks, mints, toothbrushes, lotion and other toiletries, and a handwritten prayer.

February 24: While some traditions offer a sacrament of confession, others simply encourage it as a private practice. Below is a simple prayer that can conclude a personal or communal time of confession:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen. -Book of Common Prayer

February 26: Making the sign of the cross or "crossing oneself" is not an empty gesture, or a sign of rote religion. It is a physical way of reminding ourselves that we are crucified with Christ, and of marking ourselves as Christ's own. At the beginning of Lent, our foreheads are marked with an ashen cross to remind us of our own mortality, and as we cross ourselves throughout Lent (and always), we remind ourselves that we are following in the way of the cross. The gesture itself can be a silent prayer, or you might choose to add "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" as a spoken expression of faith in the triune Lord.

How do you do make the sign of the cross? Western Christians most commonly cross themselves by bringing together the thumb with the pointer and middle fingers and touching them to your

1. Head (center of forehead)
2. Heart (center of chest)
3. Left shoulder
4. Right shoulder

February 29: The Jesus Prayer is an ancient prayer that originated with the Desert Fathers and Mothers as a breath prayer in the 6th century, and is

prayed most commonly today in Eastern churches. Its scriptural basis is Luke 18:9-14, where the Pharisee prays, thanking God that he is not like other sinners, but the Publican demonstrates humility, praying "Have mercy on me, a sinner." This prayer is said often during Lent, a season of penitence.

Inhale: Lord, Jesus Christ

Exhale: Have mercy on me, a sinner

March 4: This prayer below is part of the "Liturgy of the Hours," an official set of prayers marking the hours of the day and sanctifying the day and prayer. The concept finds its origins with the early church in Acts 2:42, and had already taken shape as set hours throughout the day by the second century, when Hippolytus of Rome wrote about it as a sustained practice in the church. The following prayer is part of the night prayer liturgy, prayed before bedtime. It is attributed to St. Augustine:

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

For a gorgeous reflection on this prayer in particular and the practice of evening prayer in general, read Tish Harrison Warren's book, *Prayer in the Night*

March 7: A prayer walk need not be formal; it can just be time outdoors to talk with the Lord. However, if you are interested, this would be the perfect opportunity to visit a prayer garden, or an outdoor Stations of the Cross.

March 11: Jesus quotes this psalm in his final words from the cross saying, "Into your hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit." Remembering Jesus those final moments of Jesus, pray this breath prayer each time you wash your hands today:

Inhale: Into your hands I commit my spirit;

Exhale: Deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

March 16: Have you ever received a surprise dinner from someone? There are few things that say "I see you, and I care about you" more clearly. There are a few ways to go about this: 1) Double whatever you are cooking for dinner tonight and drop half off for another family (or single person!). You can even make it today and drop it off tomorrow. Suggestion: Soups are easy to make, easy to double, and easy to freeze! 2) Grab a meal out of your freezer if you already have a stash. 3) Bake a St. Patrick's Day treat: cookies with green icing or Lucky Charms rice crispy treats.

St. Patrick was born off the coast of northwest Britain around 390 AD, into a family of Christians—his grandfather was a priest, and his father was a deacon. When Patrick was sixteen, he was captured by a band of Irish pirates, and carried off to Ireland where he was forced to work as a shepherd. After six years in captivity, Patrick escaped and caught a ship back to Britain, where he entered into holy orders and eventually became a bishop. At some point after his return, Patrick had a vision of an Irishman named Victoricus, who beckoned him to "come back and walk among us." Patrick took this as a sign from God that he was to return to Ireland—this time not as a slave, but as a missionary, preaching the Gospel to the very people who had enslaved him.

Visit LittleWayChapel.com for the St. Patrick's Day Guide.

March 25: Matthew 21 tells us that on Monday of Holy Week, Jesus entered the Temple Courts and cleared them of the traders who were selling sacrificial animals. Just as Jesus uncluttered the Temple on Holy Monday, your family can take an intentional step to simplify your life by packing up items to give to charity.

March 26: A traditional Lenten prayer repeated over and over in the Stations of the Cross liturgy is "We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world." Today, as we pray this prayer, we think of Mary, adoring the Lord as she poured expensive perfume at his feet, anointing him in preparation for his burial so that by his holy cross he would redeem the world.

March 28: Many churches offer a Maundy Thursday service that includes a simple dinner of soup and bread. If you don't plan to attend church, consider having your own soup and bread supper at home. During dinner, read John's account of the Last Supper and Jesus washing his disciples feet in John 13:1-20. After dinner, take turns washing one another's feet.

March 29: Many churches offer a Good Friday service. If you are unable to attend, consider praying the Stations of the Cross at home with the Little Way of the Cross Guide available at LittleWayChapel.com. Other ways to observe Good Friday are by abstaining from meat, wearing black, and holding silence between 12-3pm, when Jesus hung on the cross.

March 30: On Holy Saturday, Jesus is in the grave. Prepare both your heart and home today for the resurrection. It is both a time for mourning, but also a time of Easter hope. Pray the breath prayer below throughout the day and we inch closer and closer to the resurrection. The prayer comes from 16th century theologian and mystic, St. John of the Cross, most famous for his work, *Dark Night of the Soul*.

Inhale: Through the cross

Exhale: To the light

Consider waiting until this day to decorate your home for Easter, dye eggs and prepare. Remember, Easter is a season that lasts eight weeks, so there's no rush to decorate!



Inhale

Rest in peace

Exhale

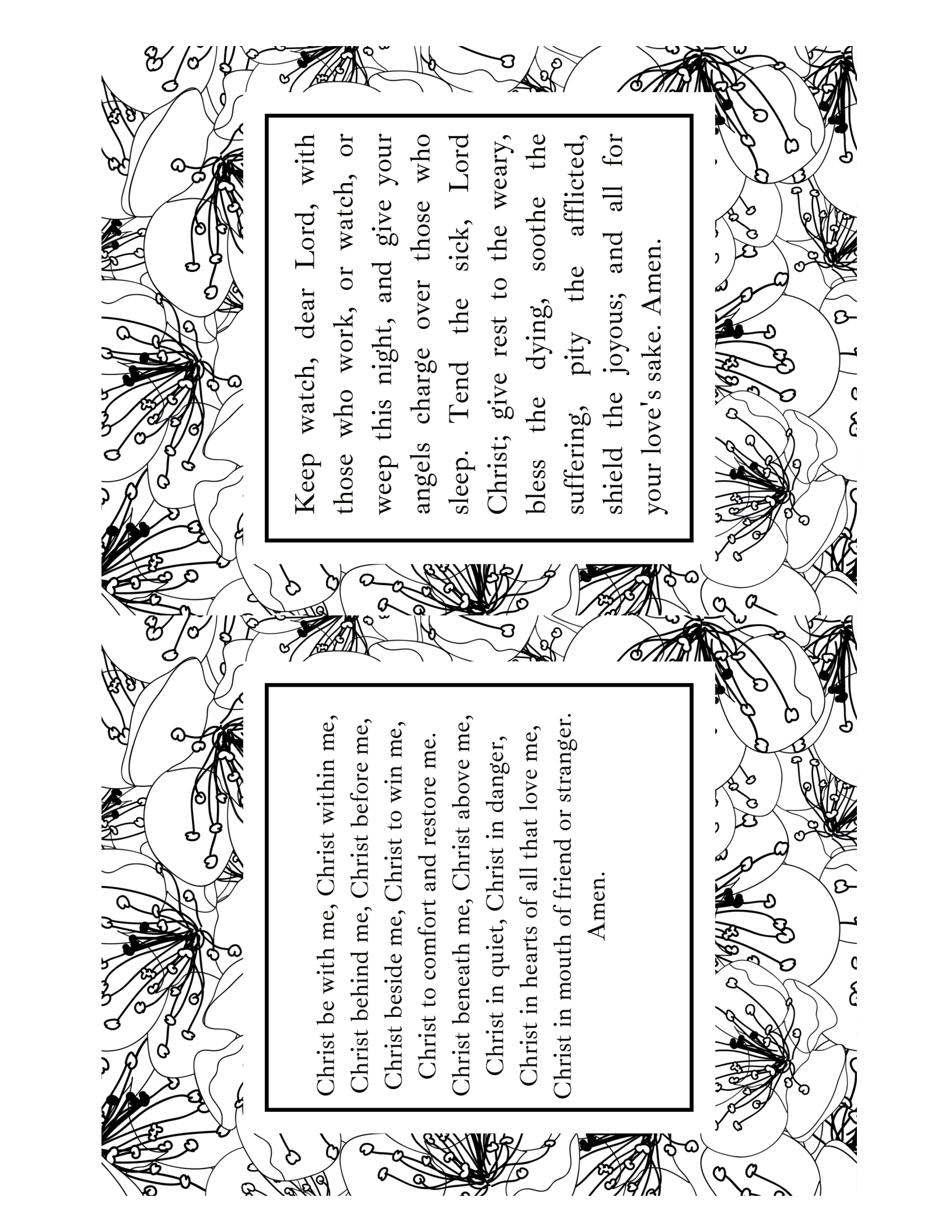
Rise in glory

Inhale

Create in me a clean heart

Exhale

Renew a right spirit in me



Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.

Amen.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with
those who work, or watch, or
weep this night, and give your
angels charge over those who
sleep. Tend the sick, Lord
Christ; give rest to the weary,
bless the dying, soothe the
suffering, pity the afflicted,
shield the joyous; and all for
your love's sake. Amen.



Inhale

Into your hands I commit my spirit

Exhale

Deliver me, Lord, my faithful God

Inhale

Let it be to me

Exhale

According to your word



Inhale
Lord, Jesus Christ

Exhale
Have mercy on me,
a sinner

Inhale
Through the cross

Exhale
To the light



