

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.



ASH WEDNESDAY

Feasting and Fasting

Isn't it amazing how things can change from one day to another? One day it's *Mardi Gras* (French for "Fat Tuesday"), a time of feasting before the ritual fasting of the Lenten season. The next day is Ash Wednesday, and instead of delicious food in our mouths, there is a taste like dry dust.

My goals for Lent are not always spiritually motivated—maybe I will lose a few pounds so I will look good on Easter. But instead of abstaining from chocolate, it might be a better idea to abstain from anything that keeps me from a right relationship with God and others.

Can I fast from judging others and see the good in them? Can I fast from complaining and give thanks for the blessings in my life? Can I fast from negativity and try to be more optimistic? Can I fast from idle gossip and speak words of charity? Can I fast from needless anxiety about problems that overwhelm me and look to the future with hope? Can I fast from bitterness and try to reconcile with those who have injured me? Can I fast from self-righteousness and seek forgiveness from those I have hurt? Can I fast from causing divisions in my relationships and try to be a peacemaker? Can I fast from impatience and live one day at a time? Can I fast from business and find time for prayer? Can I get rid of my gloomy looks and put on a Lenten smile?

If I can do these things, my Lenten days will be filled with God's goodness.



*Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful.*

JOEL 2:13

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Losing Our Way

All of us have had the experience of being lost and forced to ask for directions. Recently my husband and I went on a trip to an unfamiliar place with no map and no GPS. When we stopped to ask the way to a certain town, the person asked, “Which way would you be coming from?” That seemed like an irrelevant question at first. What possible difference would it make which way we were coming from? On reflection, the question made good sense. When we search for a destination online, we have to enter our starting point to find our destination.

“How do I get there from here?” We can also ask this question when we have lost our way in life, like the loss of a job, the diagnosis of an illness, or the sudden death of a loved one. Profound loss makes us question our direction in life. Things we thought were so important begin to look so insignificant. We wonder where we are going, if anywhere. How do we find our way when our very sense of direction is gone? We may feel we’re going in circles, wandering aimlessly, or at a dead end—road closed, bridge out, detour.

Most everyone has heard the poem “Footprints in the Sand.” When a man complained that he saw only one set of footprints in the sand during a difficult time, the Lord replied, “Those footprints were mine! It was then that I carried you.” Only by trusting God to lead the way will we rediscover our focus and direction in life.



*If anyone wishes to come after me,
he must deny himself and take up his cross daily
and follow me.*

LUKE 9:23

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

A Joy That Will Last

Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting are the three great disciplines in Jewish religious life. When Jesus was challenged as to why he and his disciples did not practice fasting, he answered with a parable of a wedding feast. Such a joyful occasion rarely came into the lives of the poor people of Jesus' day, but when it did, they knew how to celebrate. For a week after the wedding, the bride and bridegroom were treated as a king and queen, with their closest friends and relatives sharing their joy. The parable also tells us that suffering comes with joy.

My husband and I have been married more than fifty years. Whenever we attend a wedding and hear the traditional vows, "I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life," we wonder if the young couple has any idea what that might entail. What happens when jobs, health, or fidelity fails? The slogan, "The family that prays together stays together" is well known; yet although the divorce rate is lower among active Catholics than other groups, it too is rising.

Jesus was never under any illusions regarding his future. He knew the cross awaited him at the end of the road. He told his followers that they had experienced great joy in following him but asked if they could go through the suffering the cross can bring. For Jesus' disciples, that time of sorrow would certainly come, and it is inevitable for us as well. All human relationships eventually come to an end. Only the joy of heaven lasts forever, and nothing can take it away.



*The days will come when
the bridegroom is taken away from them,
and then they will fast.*

MATTHEW 9:15

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Hauling Away the Trash

Beep! Beep! Beep! The trash truck wakes me with its unrelenting beeping. It is early, and I put the pillow over my head to shut out the sound. It is annoying, and I want it to stop! When I'm up early enough to see the workers, they always smile and offer a cheery "Good morning." I manage a wave of my hand and leave them to their work.

I wonder, *What would happen if the trash truck never came?* The garbage would pile up, and who would haul it away?

Jesus came to remove the refuse of our lives, and he is here to do it again and again and again! "Repent! Change your life!" he keeps telling us, even when I refuse to listen. I try to pretend that everything is all right, that there is no one I need to forgive, no one who needs to forgive me.

Jesus illustrates this with a story of the Pharisees who criticized him for eating with sinners and the hated tax collectors, one of whom he chose as an Apostle. In gratitude the so-called sinner invited Jesus to a feast—and he invited his fellow outcasts to join them. Will I stop my ears and ignore Jesus' persistent call so he can take away the rubbish? The sacrament of reconciliation may not be my favorite thing to do, but if I want to be more like Jesus, I know it's necessary to celebrate the eucharistic banquet together.



***I have not come to call the righteous
to repentance but sinners.***

LUKE 5:32

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

What Did You Learn?

When I am faced with difficult trials, I yearn for answers to my troubles. Usually the answers come in the day-to-day events and relationships in my life. These ordinary experiences have a way of showing me the deep work of God in my life. Sometimes God takes me into the desert to teach me—not the Mojave Desert, but the dry places within me. I need not fear the desert, for it is there that I can hear God’s voice like never before.

Several years ago I was caring for my mother who had Alzheimer’s. Anyone familiar with the disease knows it is a 24-7 job. I became worn out and felt that I could no longer care for her. My mother was gradually losing her eyesight and was only able to walk with support. One day as I was taking her down the front steps on our way to her doctor’s appointment, she tripped and both of us almost fell. In desperation I cried out, “Lord, how much longer must I do this?”

It was then that I heard the voice of God in my heart. God didn’t say, “Kay, what a wonderful daughter you are,” or “Kay, you are a great example for Christian women.” All I heard was, “What did you learn?” As I pondered this question, I began to understand that faith is less the questions we have for God and more about the questions God has for us. Saint Bonaventure once said, “We are always in school, and it’s always kindergarten.” I guess I have a long way to go before I can graduate.



*One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes forth
from the mouth of God.*

MATTHEW 4:4

"What makes Kay Murdy's reflections unique is that she guides us in allowing the Word of God to speak directly to the heart rather than deriving a lesson from it."

—*The Very Rev. Thomas Welbers, pastor,
Church of the Good Shepherd, Brentwood, California*

"Kay Murdy's crafty and creative weaving of story, Scripture, and life experiences unearths a wisdom that is sure to touch hearts and transform lives."

—*Edith Prendergast, RSC, Director of Religious Education,
Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

The signs of Lent and Easter

—such as desert, fire, water, darkness and light, fish, temple, and community—are all doors to the sacred.

In *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter*, Kay Murdy focuses on these symbolic opportunities for Lenten reflection and conveys to readers a way of opening each human sense to experiencing God.



Imprimi Potest: Harry Grile, CSsR, Provincial, Denver Province, The Redemptorists

Published by Liguori Publications, Liguori, Missouri 63057

To order, call 800-325-9521 or visit www.liguori.org

Copyright © 2013 Liguori Publications

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

p ISBN: 978-0-7648-2047-2 / e ISBN: 978-0-7648-6821-4

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Excerpts from the English translation of *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* from *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved.

Compliant with *The Roman Missal*, third edition.

Images: Shutterstock except as noted

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of The Redemptorists.

To learn more about The Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Printed in the United States of America

17 16 15 14 13 / 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.