

Lenten Prayer Service



I WILL GIVE YOU A HEART OF FLESH

**This prayer includes an optional ritual.*

Each participant either brings her own stone or takes one that is available upon entering the prayer space.

A table or the altar can be set with candles and a bowl or plate filled with small cut-out felt red hearts.

Leader:

As we enter into the deep experience of Lent, we take this opportunity to reflect on God's mercy, a mercy without conditions, without payment. The mercy of God is infinite and all-encompassing. We cannot understand it. God does not need us; but God wants us. God won't let us run away, because even in our running away, God is with us, offering mercy. Even when our hearts are as cold and hard as stone, God is still with us, continually offering us the warmth of mercy.

Reader:

a reading from the book of Joel 2: 12-18

"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 relents of evil. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, 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?'" Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.

Response:

"Return to God" by Marty Haugen

**Refrain: Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy;
Come seek the tender faithfulness of God (Repeat)**

1. Now the time of grace has come, the day of salvation;
Come and learn now the way of our God. **(Refrain)**
2. I will take your heart of stone and place a heart within you,
A heart of compassion and love. **(Refrain)**
3. If you break the chains of oppression,
If you set the pris'ner free;
If you share your bread with the hungry,
Give protection to the lost;
Give a shelter to the homeless,
Clothe the naked in your midst,
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn. **(Refrain)**

Examen based on the Enduring Qualities of the First Dominican Sisters

Reflection:

Let us reflect on the enduring characteristics of the First Dominican Sisters in the US, reviewing the times when we have followed the way of our Sisters and those times when we did not. (Quiet time to reflect)

- **Openness to the Spirit**
- **Selflessness and generosity**
- **Fortitude in a time of great difficulty**
- **Acceptance and resilience**
- **Resourcefulness and Humility**
- **Trust in God's Providence**
- **Willingness to receive help**
- **Courage**

After the reflection, play one of the following Kyries or recite the Kyrie.

Kyrie:

Choose one: each of these is about two and a half minutes long

- **Kyrie Eleison Missa De Angelis sung by solo female**
- **Kyrie (polyphonic) Kyrie Eleison Missa De Angelis with lyrics**
- **Ukrainian Orthodox Choir by Kyiv Chamber Choir**
- **Russian Kyrie with icons - Nikodimos Kabarnos**

Ritual of Conversion of Heart

Reader:

a reading from the book of Ezekiel 36:22-28

Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

After a brief quiet time, participants bring their “heart of stone” to an altar or central table and pick up a “heart of flesh” represented by the felt heart.

Closing Prayer:

May the Creator who loves us fill us with the Holy Spirit and enflame our hearts with love. May Jesus, who is all love, give us the grace to love as he did. Amen.


All join in singing of the closing hymn

Closing Hymn: "Mercy, O God" by Francis O'Brien

Refrain:

**Mercy, O God, have mercy on us. Send down your mercy to set us free.
Mercy, O God, have mercy on us. Send down your mercy to set us free.**

1. Now is the hour, the day of salvation
Now is the time to return to God.
Open your life to forgiveness and mercy
Open your life to the Lord. Refrain **(Refrain)**
2. Long is the journey and steep are the mountains
Come now and guide us, O gracious God
Show us your face, give us hope for the journey;
Lead us to walk in your love. **(Refrain)**

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- The background of the page is a soft pink color filled with numerous white hearts of various sizes. A large, fluffy yellow cloud is positioned in the upper middle section of the page.
3. Wash us anew in your life-giving water
Come quench the thirst of our yearning hearts
Break through the silence
The fear and longing.
Embrace us with unending love. **(Refrain)**
4. Wake O sleeper, awake from your slumber.
Rise from the chains of the dark, cold tomb.
Walk in the light of compassion and mercy.
Walk in the light of the Lord. **(Refrain)**