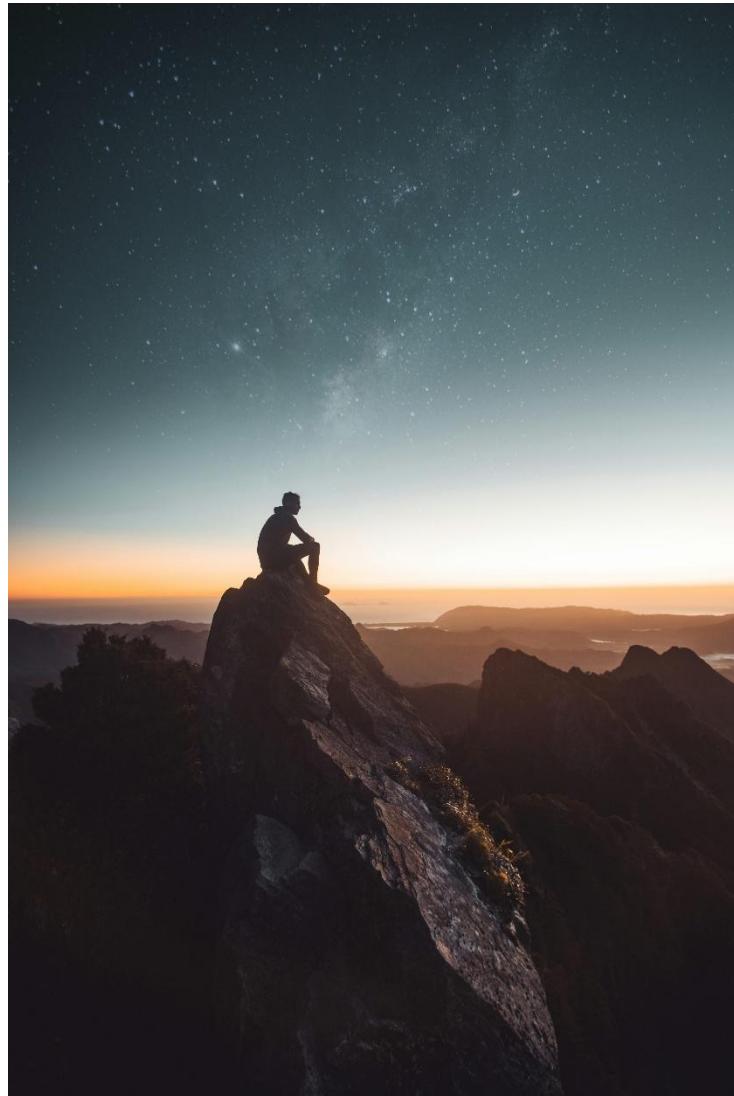


Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 22 February 2026
Lent 1**

In our first Lenten edition, we enter the wilderness with Jesus. It is where Jesus has gone to prepare for his earthly ministry. He is alone in nature, alone with his thoughts and with his Father in heaven. His self-discipline includes fasting. Denying what his body craves, Jesus places his trust in God's loving care and provision.

What will you do this Lent to grow your trust in God's loving presence and generous providing?

May you feel yourself to be in God's hands.

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to step out into the Lenten wilderness with Jesus,
seek what you need for the journey.*



Forty days and forty nights
thou wast fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
tempted, and yet undefiled.

George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)

Francis Pott (1832-1909)

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**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home
Fully in God's hands**

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. You may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in this room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

Father, as I prepare to spend this time in your presence,
I place myself into your hands.

Whatever you may do, I thank you:

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let your will be done in me,
and through me.

Amen.

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the words of this second verse of our wilderness hymn.

Sunbeams scorching all the day;
chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
prowling beasts about thy way;
stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.

George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)

Francis Pott (1832-1909)



If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

Feel our Lord's love and compassion and receive of his forgiveness.

Our verse paints a very clear picture of life in the wilderness. It is not a life or a habitat that anyone would choose for themselves. But Jesus did. He wanted to let go of his old life as the carpenter's son and prepare for life as the Messiah. It will not be a comfortable one as this exchange shows.

Then a teacher of the law came to him and said,

‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’

Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’

Matthew 8:19-20

The wilderness helps him to prepare for this. Out in the wilderness, there is so little to live on. It is a place of learning. Learning to trust in God's providing. Learning to trust in God's guiding. Jesus is fully in God's hands as he ponders how to be the Messiah.

Unlike the Israelites during the wilderness, Jesus does not grumble. There are no complaints about the lack of food or clean water. He focuses on what he has come to do – fast and pray, listen and learn, plan and prepare for his first post-wilderness steps.

It is not easy. It takes forty days and forty nights.

How will you use Lent's forty days as a wilderness place? Where you can learn to let go and trust in God's wisdom and providing?



Shall not we thy sorrows share,
and from earthly joys abstain,
fasting with unceasing prayer,
glad with thee to suffer pain?

George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)

Francis Pott (1832-1909)

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly cycle of prayer to our God who always listens to our prayers.

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer invites us to follow our Lord's example and use these days of Lent wisely and fruitfully. Lent is when we can ask God to provide for us, to give of himself to us. What we are seeking is that most precious of experiences – when time stands still and our spirit becomes at one with God's Spirit. It is a wondrous feeling. Yet not always easy to achieve in the busyness of our daily lives. Our minds can be restless and there are distractions all around us. It is why we need to find our own wilderness place. A place where we can let go, abide in God's love and simply listen. Gone are all the things, the requests, which usually cram our prayers. Instead, we place ourselves in God's hands and await his wise words to guide our life with him.

*Picture how you will keep Lent. What is it you are seeking?
What temptations might distract you? Seek God's help and resolve.*



And if Satan, vexing sore,
flesh or spirit should assail,
thou, his vanquisher before,
grant we may not faint nor fail.

George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)

Francis Pott (1832-1909)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus is tested in the wilderness

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'

Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'

Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Matthew 4:1-11

Fully in God's hands...

Forty days and forty nights are described in two short lines. It is all about Jesus being refined through temptation. A very interesting idea! One way of looking at this is as Jean-Baptiste Marie Vianney (1786-1859) writes.

The Devil only tempts those souls that wish to abandon sin and those that are in a state of grace. The others belong to him: he has no need to tempt them.

Jesus was most definitely in a state of grace. He was and is and always will be perfect, without sin or stain. The Devil could never have won, even with his excellent knowledge of the Scriptures. For Jesus is God's Son and he has come to be our Saviour King – our Self-giving Messiah. Jesus is secure in his knowledge of who he is. Even before his Father affirmed this at his baptism, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.', Jesus knew himself to be God's own Son. He was fully at one with the Father and the Spirit, and there is no way that he would ever use his God-given powers for his own purposes. He will do his Father's will because this is his will too.

He is fully in God's hands. Not the devil's.

And we, we are the souls who wish to abandon sin. We belong to Jesus. At our baptism, we promised to turn away from sin and reject evil – the wily tempter – and turn to Jesus to save us because we trust in him. Easy to promise but, in reality, requires a lot of self-discipline and selfless love. On a daily basis, we face our own personal temptations. Opportunities to follow our Lord's example or to selfishly hurt him or others by our words and actions. Thankfully, when we slip up, he will save us from ourselves and from the devil's clutches – if we turn to him. For he is our one true source of grace.

Think about how you can place yourself more fully into his hands.



So shall we have peace divine;
holier gladness ours shall be;
round us too shall angels shine,
such as ministered to thee.

Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
ever constant by thy side;
that with thee we may appear
at the eternal Eastertide.

George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)

Francis Pott (1832-1909)

OUR PRAYERS

Here are some Lenten prayers. Feel free to add your own.

Lord Jesus, you were sent out into the wilderness to watch and listen, and to experience dark times of aching loneliness. You came through all this for me. Lord, help me to have the courage to face my fears.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you set aside forty days and nights as you prepared to serve your Father and his people. You discerned your calling and grew in wisdom. Lord, help our leaders to listen your wise words. I pray for...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you faced many trials in the desert for us. You were alone, starved of human company. You were hungry, dreaming of bread.

You were in pain and God's angels came. Minister, I pray to...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, you search me and you know me,
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,
you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**