

# OBSERVING LENT SIMPLY 2022

## Choosing one's own Lenten practice.

There isn't a right way to do Lent – and many previous efforts to observe Lent rigorously with Church imposed or proffered disciplines often only subjected individuals to feeling guilty by an authoritarian institution – especially when they almost always ended in failure.

By choosing a simple practice that will be life-giving to you, you can avoid the potential of alienation or manipulation that can come with living someone else's Lent.

Also, Lent has had a heavily individual focus – which has kept everyone from recognizing the role that institutions (governments, businesses, religions, schools, etc.) have played in undermining human lives. So bearing in mind that Lent really works best in connected community, there are meaningful individual engagements that include making collective connections, that this springtime season can support.

Those meaningful engagements have to be discovered or chosen on one's own – though clergy and laity at St. Mark's are available for discussion and suggestions as you explore. The COVID pandemic, social and economic upheaval, and now the war in Ukraine all underscore the urgency and importance of a question posed by Thomas Merton that I heard recently from my teacher Jim Finley: **"Is it possible you can live your whole life and die without ever having met the person who lived your life?"**

Consider embodied practices such as Centering Prayer or other contemplative sitting and walking practices. Yoga is another. Awakening to the present moment is essential.

Our **Tuesday at 4 pm Centering Prayer group** (meets in the chapel in the church) offers the interplay of an individual engagement with the energy of being in community. There are apps (Headspace, Insight Timer, Centering Prayer) that have been around for quite awhile and have been dramatically improved through the years.

**Reading?** One very good option is the very brief but substantive daily meditation from the monks in Cambridge, Massachusetts (**Society of St.**

**John the Evangelist** – SSJE - is an Episcopal Church religious house or monastery). Their ***Brother Give Us A Word*** is always good and they are paying special attention to it this Lent. **Subscribe at [ssje.org](http://ssje.org)**. Free and it comes to your inbox. It is very easy and very worthwhile to maintain this practice day by day.

Another outstanding daily meditation that comes to you free is **Fr. Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation** (read by several hundred thousand people). You can **subscribe at [cac.org](http://cac.org)** (Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Last week's meditations were on Transformation and the True Self. You'll see a link on the home page and can hear a brief video of Fr. Richard introducing this year's meditations. A team of people work with Fr. Richard to assure interesting, high quality content year-in and year-out, every day.

**A book?** Perhaps give **Brené Brown's** new ***Atlas of the Heart*** a look? I have listened to the audio book and found it excellent. The subtitle (and this is a COVID era book – so addressing our current situation) is: ***Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience***. From her own website: "If we want to find the way back to ourselves and one another, we need language and the grounded confidence to both tell our stories and to be stewards of the stories that we hear. In *Atlas of the Heart*, we explore eighty-seven of the emotions and experiences that define what it means to be human and walk through a new framework for cultivating meaningful connection. This is for the mapmakers and travelers in all of us." Reminder: you can get it from the Book Loft or order from [Bookshop.org](http://Bookshop.org), an online bookseller that share's its profits with local book shops.

Completely current but also something of a blast from the past is ***Healing Our Violence Through Centering Prayer***, high quality recordings of a conference in 2010 in which the late Fr. Thomas Keating (Contemplative Outreach) and Fr. Richard Rohr (Center for Action and Contemplation) made the connection between our ability to be present in the now (spiritual awakening) and our practice of connection in the world. If you've ever wonder how action and contemplation are one – or if you have thought a contemplative practice to be navel gazing, this program might open things up for you.

Also, if you've wondered what happened to the good 'ol institutional church you knew and loved back in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Healing Our Violence through*

Centering Prayer might offer the bridge to the present that you need. I think it may only be available on Audible – I have looked for it from other sources and only found it there.

*Online descriptions of the program:*

"Rohr and Keating each give insights on awakening to God's friendship, coming to know God and ourselves, growing in love through centering prayer, facing evil around us and our demons within us as well as opening our deep selves to divine therapy which heals our wounds. They invite us to become who we already are."

" In a spiritually stimulating weekend, two internationally known spiritual guides explore integrating our inner and outer journeys. They challenge us to confront our inner and social violence and bring it to healing and transformation in a sacred and ecumenical context."

"These conferences will appeal to those beginning and to those more seasoned in centering prayer. The deep wisdom of two spiritual masters is a sacred and transforming gift plunging us into the ocean of divinity that surrounds us."

**Other Lent practice ideas:**

A service project or volunteer engagement, daily walks (some great walking meditation resources are available from Jonathon Stalls and his new book will be available in August – some of his content is available now on Patreon and Insight Timer), other online courses (Center for Action and Contemplation - cac.org has a range of options, as does Spirituality and Practice - spiritualityandpractice.com).

**Lent Madness** is a good standby – it has been around for a few years now. Readings and a competition day by day – voting for one saint or another – patterned after college basketball's March Madness – with one saint winning the Golden Halo – but an opportunity to learn about a number of inspiring figures in the life of the church – and in a fun environment. A great thing for a group of friends to do – or a family.

***Living Well Through Lent 2022: Letting Go with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind*** from Living Compass, a resource that is new each year and that we have had in previous years, is available as a printed copy or a PDF. Let Randall know if you would like a copy at randall@smitv.org – or text him at 805-245-4921.

There are many other options, of course.

And if you'd like to have a conversation with the Rector on the topic, get in touch with him.

## Contact Randall, our Rector? Easy.... text, call, or email

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You're invited to contact Randall to schedule time to meet in person, to ask a question, or simply to pass along some information.

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