

LENT

OPENING PRAYER (Henri Nouwen)

Oh Lord, this holy season of Lent is passing quickly. I entered into it with fear, but also with great expectations. I hoped for a great breakthrough, a powerful conversion, a real change of heart. I want Easter to be a day so full of light that not a trace of darkness will be left in my soul. But I know that you do not come to your people with thunder and lightning. Even the saints journeyed through much darkness before they could see your light. Let me be thankful for your gentle way. I know you are at work. I know you will not leave me alone. I know you are readying me for Easter – but in a way fitting to my own history and my own temperament.

I pray that these last weeks of Lent, in which you invite me to enter more fully into the mystery of your passion, will bring me a great desire to follow you on the way that you create for me, and to accept the cross that you give to me. Let me die to the desire to choose my own way and select my own cross. You do not want to make me a hero, but a servant who loves you. Be with me tomorrow and in the days to come, and let me experience your gentle presence. Amen.

- *Carrying the Cross* (Joyce Rupp)

RESPONSE: Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

On those days when life seems too demanding with all its cares, burdens, and concerns....

When we experience great loneliness deep inside, and the pain of separation fills our spirits.....

When we feel the pain of our world and unite in compassion with the Earth's suffering people.....

When we struggle with decision-making and the time comes to make good choices about our lives.....

When we are with others in their physical pain or when we vigil with one who has a terminal illness.....

When we are asked to go the extra mile, to be generous with our time and our presence....

When we feel weary and worn out, when it seems like all of our energy has been drained away.....

When we are challenged to risk our sincerity, and to accept new growth in our relationship with you.....

When we experience the effects of aging or extended illness on our bodies or our minds...

When we feel discouraged, desolate, and depressed, and want to withdraw from others.....

When worries and concerns choke our peacefulness and leave us with anxiety and fear.....

When we harbor old wounds and are called to offer or to receive forgiveness.....

ALL:

Crucified Jesus, help us to take up our cross day-by-day. Through these crosses, we can grow closer to you. Help us to lean on you and to learn from you. May we not give in to self-pity or self-doubt. Rather, let us trust in your presence which strengthens us. Encourage us on our tomb-like days. Remind us of your resurrection. Help us to keep our vision focused on life and growth. Amen.