

# *Good Enough:*

Embracing the Imperfections  
of Life and Faith



Reflections for Lent 2022





# Preparing for Daily Lenten Practices



## The Prayer Chair:

You are invited to designate a chair in your home that will be your “Prayer Chair” for Lent. Find a time during the day when you can go to the chair for at least 10 minutes, perhaps light a candle, and then spend time with the prayer meditation we have provided for you that is based on the worship theme.

## The Spirit Box:

The Spirit Box is a way of handing over the things that we worry (perhaps even obsess) about that are beyond our control. You can make a Spirit Box out of a small box and decorate it however you choose. Whenever worries pop up, you are invited to write them on bits of paper and put them in your Spirit Box as a sign that you are letting go of that which you cannot control into the care of God. Replace the time spent worrying in your head with speaking the Serenity Prayer by H. Reinhold Niebuhr, 20th c. theologian.



### **The Full Serenity Prayer**

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
As it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make things right  
If I surrender to His Will;  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with Him  
Forever and ever in the next.  
Amen.

# Ash Wednesday to Sunday: Perfection is impossible: Transformation Isn't

## A Blessing for a Joyfully Mediocre Journey

*"Blessed are you who realize there is simply not enough-time, money, resources. Blessed are you who are tired of pretending that raw effort is the secret to perfection. It's not. And you know that now. Blessed are you who need a gentle reminder that even now, even today, God is here, and somehow, that is good enough."* - from **Good**

**Enough: 40'ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection:** Kate Bowler & Jessica Richie.



*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down and put them in the Spirit Box.*



Sometimes it is life itself that robs us of the shiny, perfect life that we had planned for ourselves. A diagnosis. A broken heart. A lost opportunity. This Lent, rather than change for "the best," we'll seek to gain momentum one day at a time, "to reach for a faith that is never perfect, but good enough" (Bowler/Richie).

What in our lives do we dream about for tomorrow, void of sorrow? Time spent regretting decisions of our yesterdays, mistakes we made? Sometimes we get what we get, life disappoints us and yet, God is still here and somehow, this faith is good enough.

In this moment we hear your promise:

"You can just be you. It's enough.

You don't have to 'perform' for me,  
or try to be anybody else except for who I created you  
to be."

You do not ask us to live up to the standards of the world's version of success. Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,

I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.

With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

# Lent 1: “Ordinary Lives Can Be Holy”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*



Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It

is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" - Luke 4: 1-13

The devil lays a bet that Jesus will jump at the chance for glory, fame, and the quick fix. Who wouldn't? But Jesus keeps up the pithy one-liners long enough that the Tempter just has to slink away.

We find ourselves hungry for many things that we believe will bring us satisfaction. What are the temptations that catch your ear, singing out promises that your life should be more special than it is? What if ordinary life is already holy-as is?

Help me find the right balance, O God.

Help me be gentle in my learning and growing-with myself and with others.

Help me step back when the toxic and overbearing pace of life that I believe I must adhere to in order to live up to some external ideal threatens to tear down my connections to life, love and to you.

In this moment I hear your promise:

your yoke is easy,  
your burden light.

You do not ask me to destroy myself in order to please you.

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,  
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.

Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed  
so that serenity will return.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.

With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*



## Lent 2: “So Much Is Out of Our Control”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*

Even Jesus got frustrated when folks didn't behave as he would have liked.

Our wellbeing could be threatened by the idea that if we just try hard enough, are nice enough, say just the right thing, life will always go our way. We run around in so many directions, trying to herd the chicks into some imagined semblance of perfect formation.

What if we could let go of needing all things and all people to be “just so” and instead learn to dance with the unfolding of that which is not ours to control?



### Lightening the Load

The first thing we have to do is to notice that we've loaded down this camel with so much baggage we'll never get through the desert alive. Something has to go.

Then we can begin to dump the thousand things we've brought along until even the camel has to go and we're walking barefoot on the desert sand.

There's no telling what will happen then. But I've heard that someone, walking in this way, has seen a burning bush.

*-Francis Dorff, O. Praem. (from*

<https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/letting-go-prayers>)

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an “amen,” take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

## Lent 3: “Lots of Things Can Be Medicine”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*

This week we turn to a harmful idea that the prescription for our fear of failure is to simply work harder. As the book *Good Enough* reminds us, “We might feel we are climbing an ‘endless staircase’ of achievement, for high grades or success...[in] caregiving, work, or social pressure.” This Lent, we are taking some time to stop climbing ladders and staircases, to tend our souls slowly and lovingly, tilling the soil and fertilizer, and embracing our holy, “good enough,” lives.

The productivity experts and self-help gurus promise us a guaranteed way to turn our lives around. But the gardener offers an alternative medicine-nurture it slowly, letting it soak in the manure all around until it can get the good stuff out of it. Lying fallow and getting fertilized with laughter and tears at the crappy stuff of life can help heal what ails us and that is sometimes productive enough.

What is it that feeds my soul?

Is it walking in the forest, breathing in the scents of cedar?

Is it getting my hands dirty, planting seeds or creating objects out of wood?

Is it meditating, chanting, singing or listening to music?

Is it spending time with trusted friends, laughing and telling stories?



Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Saviour and my God. (Psalm 42:5)

Awake, my soul!

Awake, harp and lyre!

I will awaken the dawn. (Psalm 57:8)

If of thy mortal goods thou art bereft,

And from thy slender store two loaves alone to thee are left,

Sell one, and from the dole

Buy hyacinths to feed thy soul. (Saadi Shirazi)

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an “amen,” take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

## Lent 4: “We Often Believe We Are the Problem”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*

We can be pretty hard on ourselves when things don't go as planned. Guilt, shame, and fear of being seen as a failure can leave us wallowing in the pig pen. Our delusions of a perfectible life keep us disappointed in ourselves. Truth is, life is a big ole risk every single day and facing whatever each day holds is not only good enough, but worthy of love and grace.



God of mercy, like the prodigal son  
I return to you and say:  
"I have sinned against you  
and am no longer worthy to be called your  
son/daughter."  
Christ Jesus, savior of the world,  
I pray with the repentant thief  
to whom you promised paradise:  
"Lord, remember me in your kingdom."  
Holy Spirit, fountain of love,  
I call on you with trust:  
"Purify my heart,  
and help me to walk as a child of the light."

Affirmations - say these words to yourself:

"I am more than my past mistakes."

"I accept that I did the best I could at the time with what I knew."

"Forgiveness is a gift to my own mental health."

"Just for today, I will let go of all resentment toward myself."

"I am whole and I am still learning."

"Daring is saying that I will eventually fail, and I am still all in." (Brené Brown)

I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.

Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed  
so that serenity will return.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.

With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*



## Lent 5: “We Are Fragile”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*

“Oh, don’t say that,” so many of us have said to a loved one who speaks the truth about the fragility of life. Perhaps we get uncomfortable because it reveals the precious nature of the present moment, laying bare the beauty and horror of it all. The indescribable pain we know we will one day face invades our senses like a pervasive perfume, inescapable. What if we stopped denying the limited nature of our lives and breathed in deeply the fragrance of vulnerability?

“We are fragile creatures, and it is from this weakness, not despite it, that we discover the possibility of true joy.”

– Desmond Tutu, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*

“We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves of air and soil, all committed, for our safety, to its security and peace. Preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work and the love we give our fragile craft.” - Adlai Stevenson



Holy Spirit,  
Fire that cannot be quenched.  
I feel like a flickering flame,  
Blown and shaken by my circumstances,  
Struggling to stay alight,  
Teetering on the edge of  
extinguishment.  
Would you put your hands around me,  
To protect me from the storms.  
Would you breathe gently upon me,  
And reignite me once again.

-excerpted from

<https://christchurchlondon.org/2021/05/a-prayer-for-when-you-feel-fragile/>

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an “amen,” take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

## Lent 6: “You Are A Group Project”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*

The drama of the story of Jesus’ last week reads like the book of our lives. Feeling hopeful one moment, we plummet the next as we deal with disappointment, danger, and grief. God’s incarnation on earth was not immune from this roller-coaster we call life. One thing we know, when the going gets rough, the last thing on our minds is climbing the ladder of self-improvement. We just want to survive, to be comforted, to have our pain known and embraced. And so we turn from the isolation of perfection and turn toward deep love. It is never too late to nurture the garden of relationships, for we are all a group project.



"In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it. - **Marianne Williamson**

"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men." - **Herman Melville**

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members." - **Coretta Scott King**

“God’s dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion.” **Desmond Tutu**

For not being aware of how my actions affect others... forgive me.  
For the times when we I just can’t bring myself to care... forgive me.  
Help me be mindful of your call to change the things I can to improve life for all.  
Help me move toward a world where your love reigns.  
In this Holy Week, move me to greater compassion for those  
who grieve, for those who are suffering.

In this moment I hear your promise:  
“Sabbath rest was made for you.  
You don’t have to earn it. It is yours, forever.”

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an “amen,” take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

# Easter: “A Good Enough Faith”

*Settle into your chair and breathe deeply. If there are worries on your mind, write them down on a slip of paper and put them in the Spirit Box.*

Easter is tricky when it comes to faith. We come for the happy ending—the “and then they lived happily ever after.” The resurrection story proclaims hope over despair and life over death, yet we know that life continued, and continues for us, as a story of spiking heartbreak moments that are not forever fixed. The nature of being created for love is that we will always hunger for more, that there is never enough life and love to satisfy. And endings are often too soon. But perhaps a good enough faith is one that moves through the chronic nature of being incurably human with an eye for resurrection moments that assure us that this good enough life is worthy of our amazement.



Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.

Rabindranath Tagore

## St Thomas the Apostle

“We do not know... how can we know the way?”

Courageous master of the awkward question,  
You spoke the words the others dared not say  
And cut through their evasion and abstraction.

Oh, doubting Thomas, father of my faith,

You put your finger on the nub of things

We cannot love some disembodied wraith,

But flesh and blood must be our king of kings.

Your teaching is to touch, embrace, anoint,

Feel after Him and find Him in the flesh.

Because He loved your awkward counter-point

The Word has heard and granted you your wish.

Oh, place my hands with yours, help me divine

The wounded God whose wounds are healing mine.

Credit: <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2016/07/02/thank-god-for-doubting-thomas-4/>

*Pray the Serenity Prayer. As an “amen,” take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

# Some Spiritual Practices to Try

Lent offers a wonderful opportunity to explore a spiritual practice that's new to you. Many of these practices connect to ancient Christian traditions, and some are newer and out of the box. Here are a variety of ways to have an appointment with God on your own throughout this season. There is no one way that suits everyone. Find the practice that resonates with you.

## Examen

The Daily Examen is a practice formed by St. Ignatius Loyola over 400 years ago. This is a personal prayer practice for the end of the day that includes a mindful reflection on the day that has passed and a looking towards the day ahead.

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/>

## Lectio Divina

“Divine reading” — or *Lectio Divina* — is an ancient way of studying scripture that focuses on listening to the word of God with the “ear of the heart.” In this practice, you review a passage of scripture multiple times with a different focus each time – to read, reflect, respond, and rest in it. <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>

## Bible Journaling

This newer practice reminds us of illuminated texts dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when artists, scribes, and monks would add gold leaf and illustrations to the Bible as a way to express the beauty of the word of God. To practice Bible Journaling, start with a Bible you want to write in, pencils and pens of many colors, choose and reflect on a verse, then let your creativity go! <https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/how-to-bible-journal/>



## Praying in Color

Developed by Sybil MacBeth, this practice has come to be known by some as “doodling prayer.” This is a great practice when your mind is racing or simply lacking focus. Simply take a pen and paper, write a name for God in the center, and add drawings or doodles around it. Then add names, struggles, joys, concerns throughout the page, surrounding and connecting them with doodles as

you feel led. <https://annacburgess.com/quietcorner/what-is-praying-in-color>



## Centering Prayer

With its roots in contemplative prayer of the early church, Centering Prayer is silent meditation centered on the presence of God. For this practice, you choose a word to set the intention of being aware of God's presence. Repeat this word silently, and when thoughts or feelings arise, return to that word. <https://www.centeringpraverny.com/basic-guidelines>

## Walking Prayer

This practice is so simple, yet a powerful way to pray with our bodies. To do this, become aware of God's presence and as you walk, be aware of your feet connecting with the ground, be mindful of the movement and rhythm of your whole body, and be aware of your breathing. Visit <https://www.meditationoasis.com/how-to-meditate/simple-meditations/walking-meditation/> to learn more about walking meditation.



We encourage you to explore this opportunity to walk in prayer using a labyrinth. There are two labyrinths that are publicly available. One is at Irving Park, 250 Menzies St. The other is at Christ Church Cathedral, 930 Burdett St. You could also make your own labyrinth at a local beach. There are numerous YouTube videos and webpages that give instructions on making the labyrinth, but here is one simple set of instructions:

<https://labyrinthos.net/layout.html>. Or you can use a paper labyrinth and trace the path with your finger: <https://www.relax4life.com/download-paper-finger-labyrinths/>

## Praying in Nature

There are many ways to be aware of God's presence and listen in nature. The Rev James Martin says, "Being in nature—by the seashore, in the mountains, next to a lake, in a park, or even in your own backyard, can be a wonderful invitation to pray. There is something inherently calming about nature, as if God is inviting you through the natural world to relax, to settle down, to compose yourself. Perhaps this is because in nature we come face to face with God's creation. It's not a movie or a painting or a church hymn, made by a human being, that is moving us, it's something that God himself—or herself—created. So it's less "mediated." (<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/09/03/how-pray-nature>)

## Prayer Beads

The tradition of using a string of beads or rope knots is an ancient tradition as well as a ritual action shared by many faith traditions around the globe. The common connection is the ability to give structure to personal prayer devotion. It offers a way to remind and revisit various areas of focus and concern. Repeated rituals can be powerful as they





help shape our habits.

There are many ways to pray using prayer beads! Check out <https://www.guideposts.org/prayer/how-to-pray/7-ways-to-pray-with-beads> to get started.

For a way to make prayer beads yourself, check out <https://www.kristenevincent.com/make-your-own-prayer-beads/> and go to a craft store to find beads that will work for you (feel free to adapt depending on what you find).





God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I  
cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the  
difference.

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“Listen: Hearing that Still, Small Voice and Finding Your Own”:

Small Group and Independent Study Materials

Dr. Marcia McFee and Worship Design Studio

“Busy: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God”:

Prayer Chair Take Home Pages

Dr. Marcia McFee and Worship Design Studio