

WEEK FOUR

Lent is the season in which we look forward to celebrating the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following prayers and activities are ways we can prepare our hearts for the next six weeks leading up to Easter Sunday.

PRAYER

We confess that we love comfort in a way that betrays your call to suffering.

As it is written, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

Almighty God, whose blessed son Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted in the desert by Satan, we ask that you quickly help your children, some of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ, who are assaulted by temptations and the scheming of our true enemy Satan. You are a God that cares deeply for all and you know what is needed. Show your power and salvation that your children may glorify you! Praise be to you our glorious God, to the Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns at your right hand, and to the Holy Spirit who is the seal of our inheritance, the blessed three in one, forever and ever, amen.

This Lent season we remember that Jesus was the suffering servant, who did not count equality with God something to be grasped. Instead, he humbled himself to the point of death on a cross.

FOR PRAYER WITH YOUR FAMILY, RC, OR ALONE

Let us remember in prayer our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering for their faith. Jesus says, “blessed are those who are persecuted for my name’s sake.” Let us give thanks and bless those who are suffering, but also pray for deliverance and peace. Pray for the gospel to explode in these countries and for God to save millions.

Here are the top five persecuted nations and some statistics. All of the Christians in this country experience massive violence:

North Korea: Estimates suggest there may be 300,000 Christians (~1% of the population). Most Christians are imprisoned in labor camps or they are executed, often publicly.

Afghanistan: There are an unknown number of Christians, estimated to be in the thousands. If someone converts to Christianity, they will be heavily pressured by their family and may be beaten or killed. They lose their citizenship and may lose their house and business.

Somalia: There may be less than 1,000 Christians in Somalia. The Catholic bishop has said it “not possible to be a Christian” in Somalia. Islamic militants actively hunt Christians to execute them. If someone becomes a Christian, their family (even if they don’t believe) may be threatened, harassed, and killed.

Sudan: There are estimated to be about two million Christians in Sudan (~4% of the population). The government actively demolishes churches. Little rule of law leads most Christians to flee to South Sudan. Christians are regularly labeled as spies and arrested or killed.

Pakistan: There are about four million Christians living in Pakistan (~2% of the population). Christians (and other non-Muslims) sit on death row for blasphemy. Many churches are regular targets for bombings, and state-sponsored education encourages violence against Christians.

Information gathered here: <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/01/11/top-10-worst-countries-christian-persecution>

ACCOMPANYING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:2-11

LENT CHALLENGE

Turn off the radio in your car during your commute one morning or evening and use the time to pray for your city.