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KEEPING TIME

Praying
LENT
Throughout the School Day

SANDRA IWANSKI

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DEDICATION

*To Jonathan, Christopher, and David,
who bless every season of my life . . .*

The publishing team included Roxane Kadrlik Chlachula, development editor; Lorraine Kilmartin, reviewer; Image Farm/Picturequest, cover image; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the production departments of Saint Mary's Press.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a rhythm to life. The Genesis promise of breathing in and breathing out is brought to life in the way our Church celebrates the seasons of the year . . . and in the way we move through our days.

As a Catholic high school, we invite our school community to walk in a prayerful rhythm. The natural cadence of our day includes all the bells and classes and adjusted schedules of any high school; however, we also build in moments of pause, moments of prayer, moments to notice the breathing in and breathing out of God's Spirit.

This book offers young people a way to observe a Lenten pause at the beginning of every class. As we journey through Lent, we realize that our prayer, fasting, and acts of charity prepare us to receive the salvation of Christ. These prayers are offered as a way for young people to honor the rhythms of the day and of the season.

The format reflects a tempo that is familiar to us. The leader (teacher or student) begins with the sign of the cross:

We begin this class as we begin all things:

In the name of the Father

and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Each day of Lent begins with a passage from the Scriptures. The rhythm of repeating the passage throughout the day helps us remember it. A short prayer follows the Scripture passage. After reading the prayer, the leader may choose to move to the final blessing, include a prayer everyone knows by heart, or invite particular intentions from the class. The following blessing comes from the Dominican tradition and is rooted in the writings of Blessed Jordan of Saxony, later adapted by Sr. Mary Jean Traeger, OP, a Springfield Dominican. You may choose to end your prayer time with this blessing or with one that is unique to your school or order:

May God, Creator, bless us

May God, Redeemer, heal us

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us

and give us all we need.

(Traeger, "A Dominican Blessing")

ASH WEDNESDAY

Opening Prayer

We begin this class as we begin all things:

**In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says:

*“In an acceptable time I heard you,
and on the day of salvation I helped you.”*

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:1–2

First Hour

God of all times and places, our Lent begins. Whether or not it feels like Lent to us, these forty days serve a purpose: by walking through these days with you, we prepare our hearts for the Lenten days that will come to each of us in some season of our lives. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Second Hour

God of all times and places, ashes mark our foreheads; in a smudged sign of the cross, we are public Christians. We hope these forty days will help us to be ready for the times when we will struggle in our prayer. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Third Hour

God of all times and places, the rhythm of Lent assumes that we are fasting from something that matters. Today we decide what we can eliminate from every day that will move us a step closer to being more like you. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Fourth Hour

God of all times and places, help us to keep our promise to pray, to honor the fast we have chosen, to share what we have with those who need it, to forgive and ask forgiveness, and to consider the part that suffering plays in our lives. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Fifth Hour

God of all times and places, when you see us, you see the deepest parts of us—the parts you made to be good and holy. Help us to see those deepest parts. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Sixth Hour

God of all times and places, it is time to notice that you are here in this moment. Bless us as we try to discover you and be patient as we struggle to find you. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Seventh Hour

God of all times and places, all around the world, people are making Lenten promises. We will not say our promises out loud. We pray that our Lenten lives will tell the story of what we promise you today. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Eighth Hour

God of all times and places, as the school day comes to a close, we thank you for this season. Thank you for the chance to admit to each other that sometimes life is hard . . . and to know that life was hard for you too. “Now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Closing Blessing

We sign ourselves with the sign of our faith as we pray:

May God, Creator, bless us

May God, Redeemer, heal us

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us

and give us all we need.

THURSDAY

following Ash Wednesday

Opening Prayer

We begin this class as we begin all things:

**In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

*Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. . . .
What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"*

Luke 9:23–25

First Hour

God of questions and answers, sometimes we don't feel close to you . . . we don't feel close to anyone. Sometimes we are in the middle of a terrible, very bad, no-good day. Is that what a cross is like? We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Second Hour

God of questions and answers, during Lent help us to face the tough questions about what it means to follow you. Lead us to the answer. We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Third Hour

God of questions and answers, if the invitation is to take up our cross and follow, then we need to move from where we are to another way of thinking, another way of being in this school. We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Fourth Hour

God of questions and answers, our “free will” can be a terrible and wonderful gift. We can freely will to follow you, to confront our own crosses—or not. We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Fifth Hour

God of questions and answers, we would be less than honest if we did not admit that most of the time, we do everything we can to avoid suffering, sadness—anything that is painful or difficult. Is there something to be learned from the cross? We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Sixth Hour

God of questions and answers, it sounds like you expect every human being to have a cross to bear. This Lent help us to confront our personal crosses. Help us to be honest about the struggles and to somehow learn from them. We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Seventh Hour

God of questions and answers, in our most honest moments, we admit that we want to run away from the cross. You loved your Apostles, and yet you told them they needed to struggle with the hard stuff. We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Eighth Hour

God of questions and answers, our crosses are unique. Help us this Lent to face the challenges that make each of our lives exceptional. We wonder: can we actually follow you?

Closing Blessing

We sign ourselves with the sign of our faith as we pray:

May God, Creator, bless us

May God, Redeemer, heal us

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us

and give us all we need.

FRIDAY

following Ash Wednesday

Opening Prayer

We begin this class as we begin all things:

**In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

*This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless. . . .
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.*

Isaiah 58:6–8

First Hour

God in our real lives, today we will walk past people who are unjustly bound to the label others have given them—the label some of us in this room have given them. If we can admit they are children of God, that gift can set them free. It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Second Hour

God in our real lives, what does it look like to walk through a school day and be oppressed—to not be free to let people know who we really are? We can sacrifice our judgments and give the gift of your truth. It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Third Hour

God in our real lives, most of us had breakfast today, and it is hard for us to imagine what it is like to be hungry. What alms can we give that would feed someone who is hungry? It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Fourth Hour

God in our real lives, does everyone feel “at home” in our school? Could it be that homelessness is not only about having a roof over our heads? Today, teach us how we can make everyone feel at home in our classrooms . . . in the cafeteria . . . in the locker room . . . in the gym. It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Fifth Hour

God in our real lives, there is someone who wouldn't feel tied up in knots if he or she heard a word of encouragement from us. Perhaps that is the fast you want: to put aside whatever keeps us from appreciating and encouraging others. It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Sixth Hour

God in our real lives, it is time to ask ourselves what goes through our minds when we hear someone talk about those who are homeless. Do we assume they are simply not doing anything about their situation, or do we ask what part we play in making sure everyone has a safe home? It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Seventh Hour

God in our real lives, it seems like you are telling us that there is some connection between a religious practice like Lenten fasting and justice. Help us to understand so that we can bring justice to our school. It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Eighth Hour

God in our real lives, this Lent help us to do more than just go through the motions. We can talk about prayer, fasting, and acts of charity—this time teach us how to live prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. It is Lent: let your light break forth in us like the dawn.

Closing Blessing

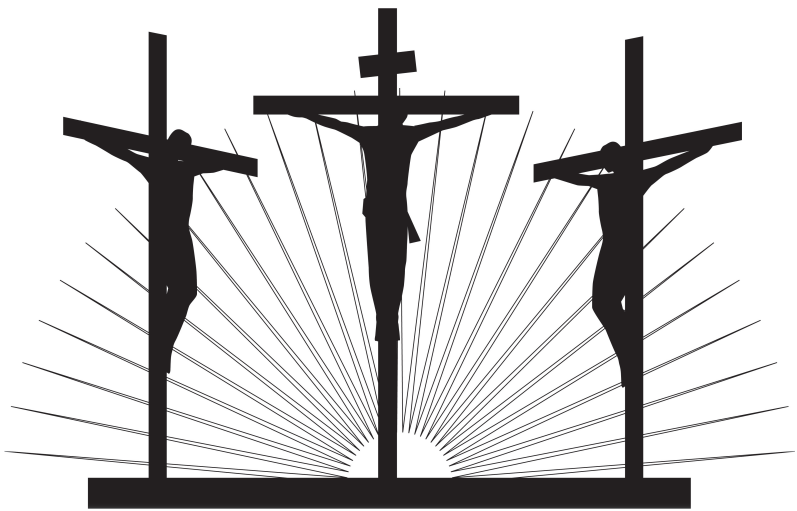
We sign ourselves with the sign of our faith as we pray:

May God, Creator, bless us

May God, Redeemer, heal us

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us

and give us all we need.



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FIRST WEEK OF LENT

MONDAY

First Week of Lent

Opening Prayer

We begin this class as we begin all things:

**In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

“And he will separate them one from another. . . . Then the king will say to those on his right, . . . ‘Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry . . . I was thirsty . . . a stranger . . . naked . . . ill . . . in prison.’ . . . ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Matthew 25:32–40

First Hour

God living among us, help us to see you. Help us to imagine the faces of students just like us who are trying to learn in the middle of chaos, and let our prayers encircle them with your love. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Second Hour

God living among us, help us to see you. There are people we know who have burdens that are just too much for them to carry alone. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Third Hour

God living among us, we expect to see you in extraordinarily beautiful moments . . . in the faces of people who love one another . . . in perfect blue-sky days. You tell us to look for you in the faces of those who struggle . . . in the lives of those who are in pain. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Fourth Hour

God living among us, it can be a challenge to put it all together: to listen to what you have to say, and to wrestle with what we think we know about Lent and prayer. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Fifth Hour

God living among us, we are unsure about what you want us to do. What do you look like today? Help us to see who is in need and to make a difference somehow—perhaps just a small difference, but a step in the right direction. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Sixth Hour

God living among us, may we realize that you are not so far away. Help us to recognize you in the people who are close to us—moms and dads, brothers and sisters, teachers and coaches, principals and deans, friends and neighbors. Teach us to honor those who are closest to us. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Seventh Hour

God living among us, help us to see you. As we move through our busy day, help us to recognize the person who needs a word of encouragement or an act of kindness. Walk with us this Lent. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Eighth Hour

God living among us, sometimes it seems like a person has to be “the greatest” in order to matter at school. You do something different: you take care of the least as well as the greatest. Help us to act as you would act this Lent. Can we really be seeing you in those who suffer?

Closing Blessing

We sign ourselves with the sign of our faith as we pray:

May God, Creator, bless us

May God, Redeemer, heal us

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us

and give us all we need.