



PRAYING THE SEVEN PENITENTIAL PSALMS

Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143¹

The seven penitential psalms have for centuries provided Christians with a powerful source of prayer and reflection during Lent. Together they invite us to recognize our sin; express our sorrow to God and ask His forgiveness; and experience the healing touch of His merciful love.

The traditional practice is to pray all of these Psalms together, either daily or on Fridays. Another practice, because there are seven of them, is to pray one each Friday (or one daily each week leading up to Holy Week).

When praying all seven psalms together:

- Begin with an antiphon such as this:
Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and show us mercy, for we are sinners before Thee.
- Say the *Glory Be* between each psalm:
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
- Close with the antiphon you began with.

When praying just one psalm:

- Begin with an antiphon such as the one above, and end with the *Glory Be*.

Meditate on these Psalms daily, one a week for seven weeks, for Lent or any time with *Create in Me a Clean Heart: Ten Minutes a Day in the Penitential Psalms* — a lectio journal. Available from Amazon.com.

¹ The Septuagint (Greek) numbering of these psalms, which is followed in some Bible translations, is 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142. In modern Catholic Bibles that follow the Masoretic (Hebrew) numbering system, the Greek numbers may be shown in brackets next to the Hebrew numbers as in the list above. If you are not sure which your Bible follows, check whether Psalm 50 or 51 begins "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love." That is the penitential psalm known as the "Miserere."