

## Seven Penitential Psalms

During Lent there are many ways to prepare with prayer. Scripture is always essential, and it is the best spiritual reading. The Psalms cover all aspects and emotions of life. As this is a penitential season it is good to choose these psalms for prayer and meditation. There are a variety of ways to pray these: a different psalm per day in the morning or evening; all seven every day; all seven every Friday. All psalms speak of personal guilt and God's forgiveness which gives hope.

Psalm 6 This brief psalm counters the lament of someone oppressed with God who is faithful in a rhythmic cadence of back and forth sorrow and hope

Psalm 32 This is a brief psalm of sorrow with as much confidence in God's justice.

Psalm 38 This psalm speaks of the loneliness of the sinner. "Greatly am I afflicted and humbled: I roared with the groaning of my heart...My friends and my neighbors have drawn near me and stood against me."

Psalm 51 *Miserere*. This is the sorrowful lament of King David after his adultery. (See 2 Sam 11-12) It is the most well-known psalm and is prayed often on Sundays of Lent. In the Liturgy of the Hours this psalm is prayed every Friday morning of the year.

Psalm 102 This psalm speaks of strong lament throughout and ends with a solitary verse of confidence in God's fidelity to his people.

Psalm 130 *De Profundis*. This psalm speaks to personal iniquity and guilt.

Psalm 142 The penitent is languishing because of enemies and prays to the Lord for strength, and not to be forgotten as he slides "into the pit" and hopefully not to be forgotten by God.