

Journey in the Desert



Week One
Preparation for Lent

As you begin this season of Lent, reflect on this passage.

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you (that) from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.

Luke 22: 14-20

Our Lord offers us his whole life. Yet, so often we focus on ourselves and what we can give God or do for God. Have you ever considered what God wants to give you? God wants to bless us with his grace. During this season of Lent, ask yourself this question - what does God want to give me this Lenten season?

Week of Ash Wednesday

Daily prayer: Each morning as you begin your day, light a candle and say the following prayer:

Lord, encourage me in this season of Lent to arise from the scourge of sin. As the cross of ashes is traced on my forehead, may I be reminded that Christ's victory over death is my entrance to a new life. I pray that my observance of this season will show me worthy of his sacrifice. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

What does this new life mean to me? What can I do today to show that I am worthy of this sacrifice?

Daily meditation: Spend a few moments each day meditating on this passage, while thinking about how prayer, fasting and almsgiving are going to be a part of your Lenten journey.

Jesus said to his disciples: Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what

your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Before you determine how prayer, fasting and almsgiving will be a part your Lenten journey, it would be appropriate for you to assess how they are part of your current spiritual practices. Below you will find some space to list your current practices.

Prayer—

Fasting—

Almsgiving—

Based on your current practices, what would you like to do differently in these three areas during Lent?

Prayer—

Fasting—

Almsgiving—

Here are some suggestions:

Prayer—(Reminder: Try to use this time of prayer in Lent as a way to deepen your prayer life beyond Lent. Prayer is about a relationship with God and that does not end when Lent is over. Be reflective in choosing this so that it can continue throughout your life.)

- ◆ Formally commit to an hour of adoration each week
- ◆ Attend daily Mass
- ◆ Come to Sunday Mass fifteen minutes early to prepare yourself, or remain after Mass for fifteen minutes to give thanks
- ◆ Stations of the Cross; come to Stations at Epiphany on Friday nights at 7 p.m., or pray them on your own. Try a version you have not prayed before, many versions can be found in our gift center.
- ◆ Spend five minutes a day in front of the crucifix meditating on Christ's sacrifice and his love for you.
- ◆ Visit the Epiphany Icon chapel
- ◆ Choose a different method of prayer and practice it
 - ◆ Lectio Divina
 - ◆ Ignation Method
- ◆ Read your Bible at least 15 minutes each day.
 - ◆ Choose one of the Gospels and read a chapter every day.
Make sure you spend some time meditating after each chapter

Fasting—(Reminder: Make sure that you have a spiritual purpose for fasting. If you decide to fast from a form of entertainment, use that time instead for a higher and noble purpose. If you fast from food, do it with joy and for the purpose of greater discipline in your life. If you fast from a behavior such as complaining, let your words be positive and uplifting.)

- ◆ Fast from certain behaviors in order to help change your behavior. Some examples of these behaviors are gossiping or complaining or pessimism.
- ◆ Reduce or eliminate the time spent watching TV or internet surfing
- ◆ Eat only what is necessary
- ◆ Eat only three meals a day
- ◆ Give up some bad food habits
- ◆ Limit forms of entertainment such as movies and dining out

Almsgiving—(Reminder: Almsgiving is not merely about giving money. Probably the most valuable thing that you have is your time. A gift of time might even be a greater sacrifice. Recognize the gifts that you have been given and find creative ways to give them to others and to God.)

- ◆ Spend time with a parent or grandparent or other family member who

- may be alone either at home or in a nursing home
- ◆ Drive someone to the grocery store or church who does not have transportation
 - ◆ Strive to do your daily duties as a parent/spouse and employer/employee with perfection. Don't waste time. Don't put off things that need to be done.
 - ◆ Counsel or pray at an abortion clinic
 - ◆ Support a crisis pregnancy centers either monetarily or with your time
 - ◆ Be a part of Epiphany's Street People Ministry and help prepare a meal

**Here are some other things to consider as you look to
a meaningful Lenten journey.**

Adopt a virtue

- ◆ Is there a certain virtue that you would like to acquire? Learn more about that virtue and how you can grow in that virtue. Then practice it.

Lose a vice

- ◆ Is there a vice that you would like to rid from your life? Spend time reflecting on the vice and why you do and how it became a part of your life. Get to the core of why you do it. Then begin the work to start rooting this vice out of your life. Be honest and hold yourself accountable.

**Education and reading during Lent is a great way to enlighten
your mind, soul, and heart. Here are some examples:**

Reading for the mind

- ◆ Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - ◆ Part Two: The Sacraments
 - ◆ Part Three: The Moral Life
 - ◆ Part Four: Christian Prayer
- ◆ Church History
- ◆ Vatican Council Documents
- ◆ Contemporary Moral Issues

Reading for the soul—use one of the great spiritual writers to deepen your prayer life and for spiritual direction. Some of these authors include St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales, St. John of the Cross and St. Catherine of Siena

Reading for the heart—pick a saint that interests you and read about this saint. Here are some examples among many for you to choose:

- ◆ St. Thomas More – “Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage” – Author: Gerard Wegemer

- ◆ St. John Vianney – “The Cure d’Ars” – Author: Abbe Francis Trochu
- ◆ St. Therese Lisieux – “Story of a Soul”
- ◆ St. Joseph – “Joseph of Nazareth” – Author: Frederico Suarez
- ◆ Blessed Virgin Mary – “Mary of Nazareth” – Author: Frederico Suarez
- ◆ St. Augustine – “St. Augustine: Confessions” – Translation: Henry Chadwick

Lent is also a good time to become even more familiar with the Works of Mercy. Here are some ideas on how to make them part of your journey.

Corporal Works of Mercy

- ◆ Feeding the hungry/Giving drink to the thirsty
 - ◆ Prepare a meal for your spouse or parents or grandparents
 - ◆ Provide a meal for a family that has recently experienced a new addition to their family
 - ◆ Step out of your comfort zone and go to a shelter to help prepare a meal
 - ◆ Each Sunday during Lent, bring at least five cans of food for the food shelf
- ◆ Sheltering the homeless
 - ◆ Check out opportunities to help with Habitat for Humanity
 - ◆ If a friend or family member is in transition, offer them your home until they find some stability
- ◆ Clothing the naked+
 - ◆ Clean out your closets and drawers and donate clothing that you no longer wear
 - ◆ Restrain from making a clothing purchase and donate the money to an agency that provides clothing for those in need
- ◆ Visiting the sick
 - ◆ If someone you know is sick, send them a card
 - ◆ Make a trip to the nursing home to visit the residents
- ◆ Visiting the imprisoned
 - ◆ Find an organization that helps connect you with a prisoner via mail.
 - ◆ Contact the local prison chaplain and find out the needs of the prisoners.
- ◆ Burying the dead
 - ◆ Make a visit to the cemetery and pray for the souls
 - ◆ Read the obituary and pray for one or more of the deceased
 - ◆ Provide a meal for a relative or neighbor who has experienced a death in the family

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- ◆ Converting sinners
 - ◆ Spend time learning more about Catholic moral teaching
 - ◆ Live out your faith; this is the greatest source of conversions
- ◆ Instructing the ignorant
 - ◆ Find an opportunity to tutor or to mentor or to coach at a school
 - ◆ Volunteer to teach or help out with faith formation
- ◆ Advising the doubtful
 - ◆ When a friend or family member comes to you seeking advice, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you give counsel
- ◆ Comforting the sorrowful
 - ◆ Spend time with someone who is struggling in their career, relationships, or health
- ◆ Bearing wrongs patiently/Forgiving injuries
 - ◆ Pray for those people that have offended you
- ◆ Praying for the living and dead
 - ◆ Offer a prayer each day for someone living that you know and for a family member or friend that has died

Looking ahead...

So, what does a “good Lent” look like? How will you know if you have had a good journey through the desert? On Good Friday, what will you feel like, what experiences will you have had these weeks of Lent? Take some time this week to really ponder these questions. Come up with just a few things that you want to do, want to experience, want to learn. Keep them in mind as you take this journey through the desert.

Take a few minutes before attending Mass on Ash Wednesday to read over the words to this song, which we will be singing during the distribution of ashes. Let the beauty of these words penetrate your mind and your heart.

Ashes

We rise again from ashes, from the good we've failed to do. We rise again from ashes, to create ourselves anew. If all our world is ashes, then must our lives be true, an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

We offer you our failures, we offer you attempts, the gifts not fully given, the dreams not fully dreamt. Give our stumblings direction, give our visions wider view, an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

Then rise again from ashes, let healing come to pain, though spring has turned to winter, and sunshine turned to rain. The rain we'll use for growing, and create the world anew, from an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

Thanks be to the Father, who made us like himself. Thanks be to the Son, who saved us by his death. Thanks be to the Spirit, who creates the world anew, from an offering of ashes, an offering to you.