

Journey in the Desert



Week Two
Solitude—The Habit of Silence

Week Three
Response—Bearing Good Fruit

Through out 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, continue to reflect on this question - **what does God want to give me this Lenten season? Have you seen any evidence of this gift in the past week?**

First Week of Lent

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

Lord our God, speak to our hearts this Lent so that we may heed your voice and follow your commandments. Help us to turn away from useless things, no matter how attractive, and help us to serve you according to your plan. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

What am I doing today that shows that I am listening to God? (Use the space below to jot brief notes each day.)

Is there anything scheduled for my day that does not build up God's kingdom? Use the space below to jot brief notes each day.)

Daily meditation: Following is the Gospel for the second Sunday of Lent. Read this scripture passage each morning, then reflect on the daily questions that follow.

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen. (Luke 9:28b-36)

Sunday—Peter had a short glimpse of what eternal life is like. What do you think heaven will be like? Can you imagine what it will be like to come face to face with our God?

Monday—Our journey towards heaven is a journey which at times can be very difficult. How has God strengthened you with the hope of heaven? Have you ever had a transfiguration experience?

Tuesday—Eternal life is the ultimate treasure. What else do you treasure? How do you treat the things that you treasure in your life? Do you treat eternal life the same way?

Wednesday—Do you think it is possible to see the transfigured Jesus in your ordinary life? Could you find him at work? at home? on the street? in prayer?

Thursday—The same transfigured Jesus that appeared to the three apostles is the same Jesus who is in our church. What would your response be to seeing the transfigured Jesus? Is your response to him present in the Eucharistic equally as reverent?

Friday—We have an amazing God whom we can go to with all our needs. Can you think of other reasons why we would go to our God? List them out and put them in practice in your life.

Saturday—How have your Lenten spiritual practices this past week allowed you to see the transfigured Lord?

Weekly Exercise

Jesus obviously had many people who wanted his attention. Yet, he always found time to pray. Reflect on these Gospel passages:

- ◆ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1)
- ◆ After doing so, Jesus went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. (Matthew 14:23)
- ◆ Rising very early before dawn, Jesus left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)
- ◆ At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. (Luke 4:42)
- ◆ In those days Jesus departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12)
- ◆ Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone. (John 6:15)

Why would Jesus have to pray? Why did he want to be alone to pray?

What are you doing in your life to cultivate silence and being comfortable with solitude?

How will spending time in silence make you a better person?

Can you plan a specific day and time in the next week to spend some time in solitude and silence? When? What will you do during that time?

Journey Check Point—Week Two

It has been three days since Lent began. Let's do a quick check up on the three main components of our Lenten journey. What are you doing differently now than you did a week ago? Make some brief notes in each of the areas below. Look back at your workbook from last week if you need more suggestions.

Prayer—

Fasting—

Almsgiving—

If you chose to adopt a virtue, reflect more on that virtue this week. Look for people in the news or people in your life who are examples of that virtue.

Make note of the situations where you were successful in your new virtuous behavior.

Also look at times these past few days when you were not successful. Take a minute to go over these situations. Replay them in your mind, but change the situation to see yourself displaying the virtue you are striving to incorporate in your life.

If you are working at losing a vice, make note of the times you were able to overcome this vice this past week.

How can you reward yourself for these successes?

Think of the times these past few days when you gave in to this vice. What can you do differently to change these situations in the future to set yourself up to succeed?

Have you followed up on any of the suggested readings for last week?

What have you read these past few days, or started reading, that is helping your mind, soul, or heart on this Lenten journey? Have you set aside time to read in the coming week? When?

Take a few minutes before attending Mass this weekend to read over the words to this song which we will be singing at the offertory.

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest; Lay down, O weary one, lay down your head upon my breast." I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn, and sad; I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold I freely give the living water; thirsty one, stoop down and drink, and live." I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life giving stream; my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's light; look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright." I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun; and in that light of life I'll walk till traveling days are done.

Circle the passages that are the most meaningful to you and where you are on your journey. How do Jesus' words make you feel?

Finally...

Look at your workbook from last week, what notes did you make about what a "good Lent" looks like? What things have you put in place to help you along this journey?

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Second Week of Lent

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

Gracious and merciful God, your patience goes far beyond our imagination. Be with us this day that we might repent and come back to you. Give us the courage to admit what we have done wrong and what we have failed to do right. Let your compassion fill us with hope as we strive to live a life worthy of your Son Jesus Christ.

Are there any challenges that are facing you today? (Use the space below to jot brief notes each day.)

How can you respond in a Christ-like manner? (Use the space below to jot brief notes each day.)

Daily meditation: Following is the Gospel for the third Sunday of Lent. Read this scripture passage each morning, then reflect on the daily questions that follow.

At that time some people who were present there told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'" (Luke 13:1-9)

Sunday—There is a sense of urgency in Jesus' tone. Why the urgency? If Jesus were speaking to you, what would He be telling you not to put off?

Monday—A frequent message from the prophets was the word repent. What do you think of when you hear that word? How would repentance apply to your life?

Tuesday—If Jesus were to come inspect the "fig tree" of your life, what would he find? What type of fruit is your life bearing? What fruits would you like to bear?

Wednesday—The gardener was going to cultivate and fertilize the ground around the fig tree. How are you nourishing your life right now? List five things you are doing to increase the good fruit that you bear.

Thursday—Just like the gardener in the parable who did not give up on the fig tree, who in your life has never given up on you? Is there someone in your life today for whom you can be the gardener?

Friday—The gardener asked the owner to give him one more year to do what he can to help the fig tree bear fruit. Look back at the last year, how have you grown spiritually since last Easter?

Saturday—We can assume that the owner was merciful and gave the gardener another year to get the tree to bear fruit. When in your life have you experienced God's mercy? If God was only as merciful to you as you are to others, how would that make you feel?

Weekly Exercise

Our actions manifest our beliefs. Jesus called his disciples to action. Reflect on these Gospel passages:

- ◆ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)
- ◆ Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43b-45)
- ◆ After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. (Luke 10:1-2)

If Jesus were to send you out to serve your coworkers, or neighbors, what specifically do you think He would be asking you to do?

What have you done this past week that would show an observer that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

Journey Check Point

It has been ten days since Lent began. Let's do a quick check up on the three main components of our Lenten journey. What are you doing differently now than you did a week ago? Make some brief notes in each of the areas below. Look back at your workbook from last week if you need more suggestions.

Prayer—

Fasting—

Almsgiving—

If you chose to adopt a virtue, reflect more on that virtue this week. List two or three ways that this virtue can be acted out.

Again this week make note of the situations where you were successful in your new virtuous behavior.

Also look at times this past week when you were not successful. Take a minute to go over these situations. Replay them in your mind, write down what you think you should have done differently to be more virtuous.

If you are working at losing a vice, make note of the times you were able to overcome this vice this past week.

Why do you think you were able to overcome this vice this week?

Think of the times these past few days when you gave in to this vice. Take some time to forgive yourself for any weakness, and jot down an encouraging note to yourself below. Use additional paper if needed.

Take a few minutes before attending Mass this weekend to read over the words to this song which we will be singing as our opening song.

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Lord, who through out these forty days, for us did fast and pray, teach us to overcome our sins, and close by you to stay.

As you with Satan did contend, and did the victory win, O give us strength in you to fight, in you to conquer sin.

As you did hunger and did thirst, so teach us, gracious Lord, to die to self, and so to live, by your most holy word.

And through these days of penitence, and through your Passiontide, for evermore, in life and death, O Lord, with us abide.

Abide with us, that through this life of doubts and hope and pain, an Easter of unending joy we may at last attain!

In this song there are eight things that we ask of our Lord. Circle or highlight these things. Which of these things speak to you right now?

And finally...

Look at your workbook from week one again, what notes did you make about what a “good Lent” looks like? What things have you done this past week that have moved you towards the experience of a good Lent?