



# LENTEN

## REFLECTIONS



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## SEASON OF LENT

**"Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights." (Matthew 4:1-2)**

### WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, and ends with the Easter Triduum of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Ash Wednesday is the start of the season of Lent - a season for penance, reflection and fasting in order to prepare ourselves for Christ's Resurrection and for our redemption.



Lent comes from the word "length". In this case it refers to spring, when hours of sunlight visibly lengthen. So Lent is just a way of saying "spring" - the season for new growth. "Easter" is also a Spring word. In northern Europe prevailing winds shift abruptly. In the winter they come from the west, in the Spring they start coming more from the east, hence "Easter."

The number of days for Lent is a holy mystery. The Church puts the number "forty" before us as the period for Lent. By doing so, we imitate Jesus Christ, our Saviour who prayed and fasted for forty days before His death and resurrection. The forty days of Lent recall a number of Biblical events: The forty days of Noah in the Ark, the forty years of the Israelites in the desert, Moses stayed on the Mountain of God for forty days, the spies were in the land for forty days (Numbers 13:25), Elijah traveled forty days before he reached the cave where he had his vision, Nineveh was given forty days to repent..

During the forty days of Lent, our Holy Mother the Church deploys all of Her inexhaustibly rich resources to bring us back to holiness, to wholeness with Christ. She reconciles, pardons, blesses, anoints, instructs, lays on hands, worships, fasts, and does everything possible to touch us with Christ. She brings us to the very springs of eternal life.

Just as spring is a time for new growth - life popping up through dead leaves - Lent is a time for our souls to grow. Our souls can go through a kind of "winter" when God seems far away. Lent can change that. It can also help us change all our bad habits and give us a "new" life.



Many people make a "Retreat" each year. It is a kind of vacation for the soul. We get away from the pressures and distractions of daily life. This gives us time to think and listen to God. You might say that Lent is a 40-day Retreat. It's a time when we push worries and fears out of our lives and concentrate on our best "Friend" and building our relationship with that Friend. The Friend is, of course, God. We can build our friendship with God by talking and listening to Him. Another good

way to do it is to read about how other people made friends with God in the past. The Bible is one source for this, the lives of the saints are another. Finally there are two words that sum up what Lent is all about. These are "will" and "power". We probably all want to love people and be loved in return. We can surely achieve this if stop hurting other people and build up a better character for ourselves. One reason why we can't do either of these things is that we don't have enough will power. The Bible says "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Here again, is where Lent can help. It is a time for building our strength of character. We learn to handle our bodies and minds by learning how to control them in small things. That's why people make sacrifices during Lent. They give up candy or smoking or a favorite TV show. This forces them to learn self-control.

If you can practice self-control in small things, we will be able to do it in more serious matters. This is only half the story. It is not enough to just give up something, we also have to start doing something good to replace it. Daily Bible reading, the rosary, receiving the sacraments regularly, are all good replacements for bad habits.

God is at work during this Season of Lent. God is offering, calling, inviting and making Himself present to us in Christ. And Christ is working on us and encountering us in His Mystical Body, the Church. He is working to bring about our well-being and our salvation. He suffered and died for our sins. He suffered and died in order that His Father might, by the power of the Holy Spirit, raise up His humanity from the dead, Spirit-filled and glorified, victorious over sin and death, and provide us with the opportunity to join ourselves into His Body and immerse ourselves in His Blood.

How, then, can we dare NOT respond? How, then, can we fail to act? How, then, can we possibly ignore Him and turn away from all that God is doing for us during Lent?

Now is the time of our salvation. Now the day is at hand. Now is the opportunity to act. Now is the time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving, so that we might empty ourselves of all that brings death, and make room for the Source of Life to enter into us, and to make us one with Him forever in Paradise.

[MORE ABOUT LENT](#) by James Akin.

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Picture of the Cross:

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