

REPENT

Meditations for the
Season of Lent

AND BELIEVE

Jesus in the Desert

Mark 1:12-15

Before Jesus began his ministry, the Spirit drove him out into the desert. After 40 days he emerged to announce that the kingdom of God was at hand and to encourage the people to “repent, and believe in the gospel.” As we begin the season of Lent, we, too, enter into our own desert as part of our renewal of heart.



Today's Gospel contains two key events of the beginning of Jesus's ministry. First, he went out into the desert for 40 days, where he was tempted by Satan and ministered to by angels. Next, after the death of John the Baptist, Jesus announced that the “time of fulfilment” was at hand, and he began his preaching and teaching. What lesson lies here for us? While Lent is a time of service to others, it must also be a time of preparation and renewal of self. We cannot give what we do not have. Just as Jesus had to spend time in the desert, so we, too, need to take time to allow God to show us where we need to change and give us the conviction to act on those changes.

POINTS TO PONDER

- What will I do this Lent as an outward sign of my repentance?
- What would I like to accomplish spiritually over the next six weeks?
- What is one thing I will do daily during this Lenten season?

“As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus’ thirst. ... ‘Repent and believe,’ Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor — he knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you.”

— Attributed to St. Teresa of Calcutta



CATHOLIC INSIGHTS

40 days in the desert

Why did Jesus spend 40 days in the desert before beginning his ministry? The number 40 has a special meaning in Scripture and is symbolic of preparation before a major life change. Moses spent 40 days fasting and praying on Mount Zion when he received the Ten Commandments (Ex 34:28). An Israelite patrol spent 40 days spying on the land of Canaan before reporting back to Moses and Aaron (Nm

13:25). And the entire Israelite people spent 40 years wandering in the desert before gaining access to the Promised Land (Nm 14:34). Jesus likewise spent 40 days before leaving his old life as the son of the carpenter to bring new life to the entire world.



SIGNS OF THE SEASON By Any Other Name

The word “Lent” has a specific religious connotation today, but originally it was used to mean “spring.” It derived from the Germanic root word for “long,” because in spring the days begin to get longer. In Latin-based languages, the word for the season derives from the term *quadragesima*, meaning “fortieth,” indicating the fortieth day before Easter. In other parts of the world, the name means “a time of fasting.”

FamilyActivity

Family Calvary Stones

The days of Lent have traditionally been used as a spiritual pilgrimage, in which we symbolically travel with Jesus to his death on the cross. To help emphasize the idea of Lent as a journey, collect 40 small stones, one for each day of the season. (These are sometimes available at craft stores.) Each night at dinner, pray for one person and write his or her name with a marker on one of the pebbles. Collect the stones in a small bowl, and during Holy Week use them to make a “mound” of prayer that holds up a crucifix.



CatechismCONNECTION

“The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church’s penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1438



LENT PRAYER Unto to you, I cry, my God!

“Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

— Mark 1:15

Lord, help us see today and all of its stresses in the light of your eternal love.