

How are we called to repentance today?

Lesson 24

Lent



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*"Produce good fruit as evidence
of your repentance."*

Matthew 3:8

ENCOUNTER

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Gathering Prayer

Leader: As we pray during this season of renewal, let us look into our hearts and discover what the Lord Jesus is asking of us. The forty days of Lent help us to look at ourselves more deeply. The liturgies each Sunday contain music and Scripture that help us to consider our own relationship with Jesus and to find the strength to listen to what Jesus is asking of us.

O God, remember your love and your faithfulness.

All: O God, remember your love and your faithfulness.

Leader: Lord God, renew our hearts this Lent as we seek your love and peace.

All: O God, remember your love and your faithfulness.

Leader: Lord God, we turn to you, knowing that we are saved by the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

All: O God, remember your love and your faithfulness.

Leader: Lord God, we long for your mercy in our lives.

All: O God, remember your love and your faithfulness.

Leader: Lord God, as we walk this journey of Lent, guide us in the loving path of your Son, Jesus.

All: O God, remember your love and your faithfulness.

Activity

Lent is a time when we become closer to Christ. We practice acts of sacrifice, such as giving up candy, doing our chores without being asked, or praying the Rosary instead of playing a video game.

Write down one thing that you will do during Lent to become closer to Christ. You do not need to share with your classmates what you have decided to do.



Lent leads us to a deeper relationship with Christ.

When Jesus went into the desert and fasted for forty days (see Matthew 4:1–11 or Luke 4:1–13), he experienced a test. Going against the First Commandment, Satan tempted Jesus to demonstrate his divinity—his identity as the divine Son of God—in a manner that was contrary to the Father’s will. But Jesus did not give in to Satan. He was tested, but he resisted temptation and obeyed his Father’s will.

In a symbolic way, the time of testing that Jesus underwent is like the journey of the Chosen People. After God rescued them from slavery in Egypt and brought them through the waters of the Red Sea, they spent forty years in the desert. It was a time of testing. Sometimes the Chosen People wished they could go back to Egypt. Some rebelled against God and set up a golden calf to worship instead. They were tempted to test God and to doubt whether God was really on their side or not.

The Chosen People eventually made it to the Promised Land, however. They looked back on that time of testing as a significant time. It revealed what was really important: being faithful to God and to their calling to be his people.

During the forty days of Lent, when we are tested in our faith, tempted by sin, or attracted to evil, we can rely on the example of Jesus to strengthen us. When we waver, we can turn back to God in the Sacrament of Penance.

The season of Lent can be like a time in the desert as we make sacrifices, pray more earnestly, and give generously to the poor. It can be challenging. But it is also a time to discover (or rediscover) what is really important: being faithful to God and to our calling as people of faith.

Lent

Did You Know?



Suffering can strengthen our faith.

Activity

On Ash Wednesday, a sign of the cross is traced on our foreheads with ashes. The ashes come from the blessed palm branches that were used on Palm Sunday the year before. They are burned and saved for the next Lent. Trace a sign of the cross on your forehead. As a group, read the following prayer: “Remember that we are but dust and ashes, yet by God’s grace we have died in Baptism and have put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, pages 92–93).

Which part of this prayer is most meaningful to you? Why?

Readers Theater

The Transfiguration

ROLES:

**Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Peter,
Jesus, Voice in Cloud**

*Peter, James, and John went to the top of
a mountain with Jesus.
They were amazed by what they saw there.*

Narrator 1: Jesus led Peter, James, and John high up a large mountain. Only the four of them were there. Suddenly Jesus was transfigured and changed dramatically. His clothes became a blazing white. His face changed and shone like the sun.

Narrator 2: At once the prophets Moses and Elijah appeared at each side of Jesus and began talking with him. Peter addressed Jesus.

Peter: "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:4).

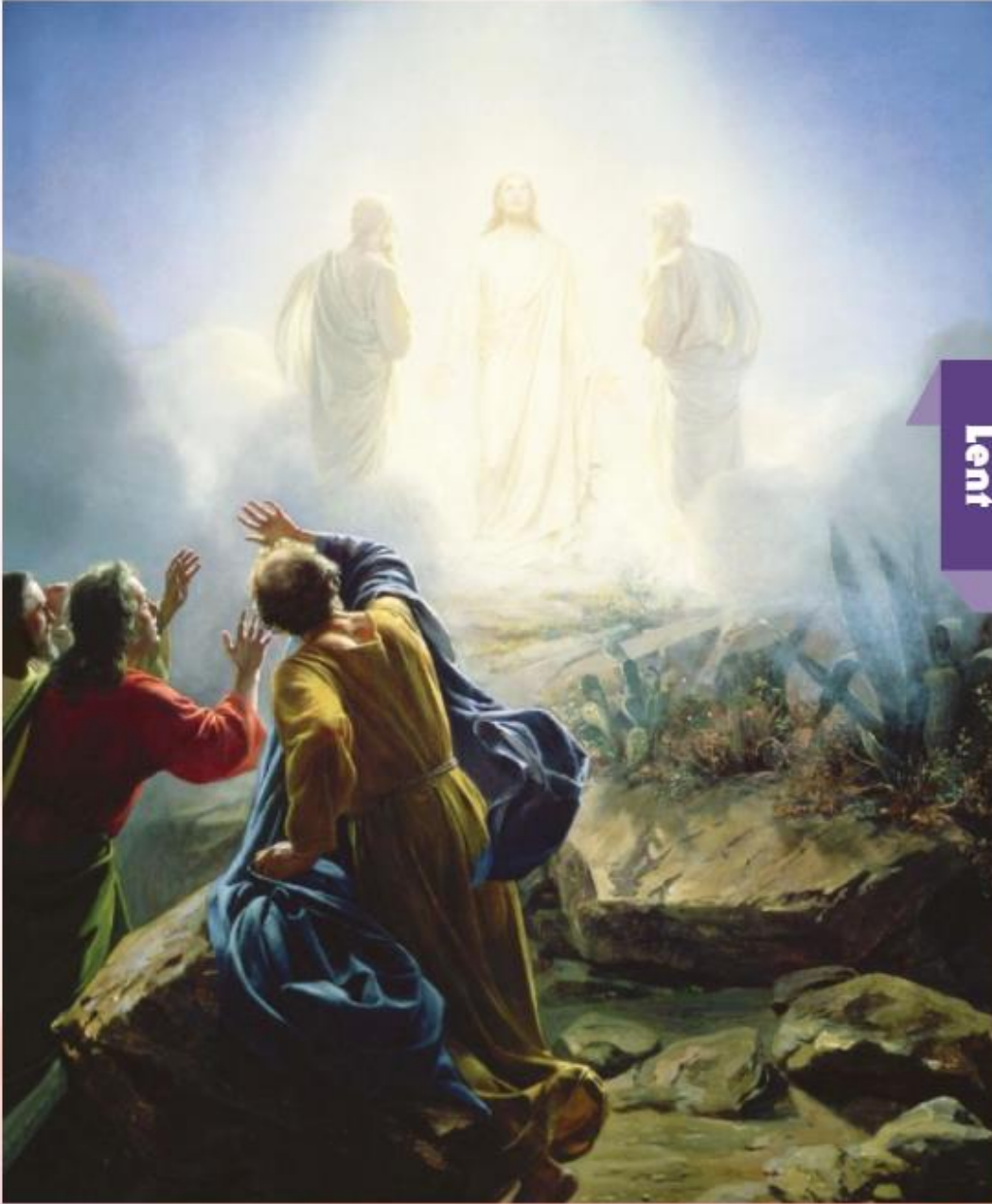
Narrator 1: But as Peter was speaking, a bright cloud cast a large shadow over all of them. And from the cloud came a voice.

Voice: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5).

Narrator 2: Hearing the voice, the disciples became terrified and fell to the ground and covered their eyes in fear. But Jesus came to them and touched them, calming them, saying:

Jesus: "Rise, and do not be afraid" (Matthew 17:7).

Narrator 1: When the disciples slowly raised their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus. He was alone. The disciples fell quiet and told no one what they had seen.



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The Transfiguration by Carl Heinrich Bloch, 1800s.

Lent

ACCOMPANY

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How is the Risen Jesus present in his Church?

Lesson 26



Easter

*"By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes."*

Psalm 118:23

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Gathering Prayer

Leader: During the Easter season, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. As members of the Church, we now live in the light of the Risen Lord. We are Easter people!

This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

Leader: Risen Jesus, you appeared to your disciples in the upper room sharing your gift of peace and light. We rejoice that we are your disciples.

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

Leader: Let the joy of the Risen Christ be known throughout the world!

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

Leader: Risen Jesus, you were the stranger on the road who was made known to the travelers in the breaking of the bread. Help us to know you in the Eucharist.

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

Leader: Risen Jesus, our hearts are filled with the joy of Easter! Let us celebrate your love in each of us.

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

Leader: Alleluia, alleluia, Christ is risen.

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, alleluia.

Activity

Like the Jewish holiday of Passover, Easter is linked to the cycles of the moon. The early Church decided that the date of Easter would be the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the vernal equinox (which is March 21, the first day of spring). So, Easter can fall anytime between March 22 and April 25. Some people say that we should choose a specific date for Easter, as we do for Christmas. Talk as a group about why we should or should not choose a specific date. Take a group vote on whether you think Easter should fall on a specific date or should continue to depend on the cycles of the moon.

Easter celebrates Jesus' Resurrection and our hope for eternal life in communion with the Blessed Trinity.

Recall that Easter does not last just one day. Rather, Easter lasts for *fifty* days. It is an entire liturgical season in which we can rejoice in the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. Through both personal and communal prayer (and, especially, through the Church's liturgy), we can grow in understanding the meaning of Christ's Resurrection for our own lives of faith.

Psalm 118 is sung often during the Easter season, especially during the first eight days, or octave. This psalm gives thanks to God for his mercy and praises his power. What could be a more perfect example of mercy and power than Jesus being raised from the dead, breaking the hold of sin and death forever?

Written long before the time of Christ, this psalm describes the paradox of the Cross and Resurrection. When Jesus was betrayed and put to death, he experienced complete rejection by the human race. Yet his sacrifice on the Cross and the power of his Resurrection make salvation possible. The psalmist rejoices:

"By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).



The refrain to Psalm 118 is also deeply meaningful: "This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad." Jesus rose from the dead many centuries ago. But this event still brings us great joy and always will.

Did You Know?



All things are possible with God.

Activity

Read the lines from Psalm 118:19–24. Circle the line that applies most to your life right now.

"Open the gates of righteousness;

I will enter and thank the LORD.

This is the LORD's own gate,

through it the righteous enter.

I thank you for you answered me;

you have been my savior.

The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;

it is wonderful in our eyes.

This is the day the LORD has made;

let us rejoice in it and be glad."

Write a few sentences on why this line from the psalm applies to you.

Easter

Easter Prayer Ritual



"This Is the Day," Tom Kendzia/OCP

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The liturgies of the Easter season are filled with joyful music, and the readings teach us in powerful images about our faith. We especially learn how to live as disciples. One of the most important Gospel accounts of the Risen Jesus is the road to Emmaus, in which Jesus walks along the road with two disciples after his Death and Resurrection. The two disciples do not recognize him, even as they walk and talk about everything that had happened to Jesus over the past few days. Then, the two disciples invite this "stranger" into their home to eat and rest (see Luke 24:13–35).

Reader 1: "And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:30–32).



Reader 2: “So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!’ Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:33–35).

Reader 3: Let us take a few minutes to reflect on the reading.

As we listen to the song, we will pass around this bread. I invite you to think about the words *They recognized him in the breaking of the bread.*

(Silent reflection while the song plays.)

Leader: Why do you think that the two disciples did not recognize Jesus? Why do you think that they finally recognized him in the breaking of the bread? What meaning might this have for us?

Leader: Let us sing “This Is the Day.”

(Sing the song.)

Leader: Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

