

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

Ready for something better? Listen to Jesus.

It may be tempting to think of Lent as a spiritual self-help season, a time to give up bad habits, eat better, or exercise. While a healthy lifestyle is important and can have a positive impact on our physical and emotional being, Lent is first and foremost a spiritual season, one in which we are called to re-order our lives so that Christ will be at the center of all we are and do.

Impact this month

Listen to God in prayer.

Listen through **fasting**, in order to be more attentive to your hunger for God.

Listen by **sharing** with those who are in need.

Listen by **being attentive** to your heart and mind throughout this season.

Every one of us has things in our life that need to change: times when we are impatient, selfish, and inwardly focused. And yes, even those bad habits and unhealthy choices can affect our relationship with God and others; unhealthy lifestyle choices are not good stewardship of our body, mind, or spirit.

While it is easy to turn in on ourselves or look outwardly toward others with judgment, the readings this month remind us that there is a better way, one that frees us to be the persons God created us to be. On the mountain as Jesus was transfigured, leaving the disciples in awe, God said, "This is my chosen Son; *listen* to him." This Lent, let us listen to Jesus and learn from him.

Face temptation. Jesus faced temptation by staying focused on and trusting in God and God's ways. When you are tempted to take the easy way out or give up on your resolution entirely, turn to God in **prayer** knowing that the Lord is ready to guide and strengthen you.

Stand firm. The purpose of the traditional Lenten practice of **fasting** is to be more keenly aware of our hunger for God. When fasting from food or a favorite treat, be steadfast in your commitment to Jesus and bear the fruit of faith.

Multiply love. Jesus tells us to store goodness in our heart. We must be ready to **share** the love, mercy, and hope of Christ at all times, in every circumstance.

Focus first on your relationship with the Lord as you make your Lenten resolutions this year. . When we listen prayerfully and change our lives according to God's ways, we are sure to find something better, life filled with light, purpose, and meaning.



The Gospels are truly Good News — the good news of Jesus Christ! The Gospels during Lent spread out before us accounts of Jesus as God-with-Us, encountering people who, like us and all of humanity, are broken and sinful, who fail to bear fruit, who are blind to God's love and dead to all that love offers.

The First Sunday of Lent always includes an account of Jesus facing temptation in the desert. Jesus holds true to all that he knows is of God. *Do you also reject sin and temptation, staying focused on God and God's ways?*

On the Second Sunday of Lent, Peter, James and John go to the mountain with Jesus. There, they have a most profound experience of Jesus, who was transfigured before their eyes; they encounter holy ones of Israel's past; and they hear the voice of God! Pope Francis calls us to be open to an encounter or renewed encounter with Christ's love, daily! (EG, 2). *What experiences of God's love have touched your mind, heart, and actions? How are you called to hear the voice of mercy that calls you to reach out to others with God's love?*

During the third, fourth, and fifth weeks of Lent, two Gospel passages are possible for Sunday Mass, since the Gospel for the celebration of the scrutinies with the Elect who will be initiated at the Easter Vigil are the same from year to year. On March 23 and 30 we hear:

- The parable of the fig tree that does not bear fruit, yet receives the mercy of the gardener;
- The account of the Samaritan woman, who encounters Jesus' merciful attention at the well and who teaches us about being open to conversion and to sharing the love of Christ with others;
- The story of the son who takes his share of his inheritance before his father has died (imagine that!) and whose father waits for his return, running to him with a joyful and lavish expression of forgiveness and mercy;
- The narrative of the man who is healed of his blindness when everyone around him seems determined to live in darkness rather than embrace Christ's vision of mercy and love;

How do you experience God's mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and love, especially when you are least deserving of it? How does faith enlighten your mind and heart so that you are ready to see and respond to God's love?

Find patience (and hope) in the journey

"Beyond the darkness we glimpse a light: we come to realize that evangelization is sustained by the power flowing from Christ's cross and resurrection. In this way, we learn to practice a virtue closely linked to hope, namely *patience*. In our fast-paced world, we are used to wanting everything now. We no longer have time simply to be with others; even families find it hard to get together and enjoy one another's company.



A renewed appreciation of the value of patience could only prove beneficial for ourselves and for others. Saint Paul often speaks of patience in the context of our need for perseverance and confident trust in God's promises.

Patience, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, sustains our hope and strengthens it as a virtue and a way of life.

This interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus."

(Spes non confundit, 4, 5)