

JESUS
MY REFUGE
MY LIFE



LENTEN PACKAGE

#OYPLentenProject21

The **purpose** of this Booklet is to allow each of us to be intentional in our Lenten journeys through offering up every single day in prayerful reflection. Wherever we may be in our own spiritual journeys, this Booklet is an invitation for us to take ownership of our faith, and to begin to witness the love of God in a season of renewal and homecoming.

We encourage you to share this resource with your own communities, cell groups, friends and families and use this Booklet to pray together with the people around you. If you are using this Booklet as your personal Lenten commitment, we encourage you to also share God's goodness with those whom you feel prompted to reach out to at the end of each week.

How to use this Booklet:

Find a quiet space and remove any form of distraction around you. Open up with a prayer, inviting the Lord to enter into this space.

Slowly read through the material for the day. Do not rush through the material, but allow the Lord to speak to you in the way that He desires.

If there are reflection questions/ activities for that particular day, be honest and vulnerable with God when writing down your responses. As much as possible, follow through with every reflection question/ activity - let that be your commitment to God for this entire Booklet.

After your reflection/ activity has been concluded for the day, say a short prayer giving thanks to God for the grace that He has given you to be present with Him in the moment.

*"but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint."*

- Isaiah 40:31

Waiting has become a commonplace in the majority of our lives.

To some degree, we have all experienced the agony of waiting, especially in this pandemic. The pain of waiting for things to go back to normal may be too much for us to bear and we have already grown tired of being disappointed time and time again.

Perhaps, the same can be said about our spiritual lives. For some of us, it may have been a long time since we have heard God's voice or felt His presence. For others, we may be waiting for Him to deliver us from our struggles, whether it be in our relationships or careers.

Yet, in this Lenten season, Jesus invites you to come out of your slumber and follow Him. He is giving you this opportunity to grow closer to Him wherever you may be in your spiritual lives. The road to the Lord's resurrection will be one filled with discomfort, but He desires to give you a new life in Him this Lent.

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sunday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

GOSPEL: MARK 1:12-15

"And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

REFLECTION

For some of us, when we think of Lent, we are led to think of the grandeur and jubilation that Easter brings – when Christ rises from the dead and liberates the world from sin and death. However, in today's Gospel, we are made to face the blunt reality of the Lenten journey, before we get to celebrate the victory of Christ's resurrection at the end of Holy Week.

If we had a choice, most, if not all of us would rather the secure and comfortable path in life than the painful and unpredictable. Yet, difficult moments and suffering somehow finds us even when we are not seeking them and challenges us in many ways, especially our faith in God.

Recently, my own prayers have at times been filled with complaints about various things, ranging from academic related concerns to interpersonal relationship issues. Even though I intellectually know that I am growing in the discomfort, my frivolous heart still sometimes wonders, "Jesus, is this suffering truly necessary?"

Paradoxically, in the Gospel, it is the Holy Spirit who led Jesus out into the desert where He experienced temptation from the Evil One. The Spirit led Jesus out into the barren and sweltering wilderness not to test His divinity, but to reveal to us what it means to live out our humanity in the face of adversity. In the same way, the trials in our lives are not there to break us, but to allow us that opportunity to form that habit of leaning on God in those moments of desperation. It is in our struggles that we ought to all the more cry out "more of you Jesus, less of me!"

As we enter into this new Lenten season, Jesus assures us that He understands what we are going through, for He has gone into the desert before us. No matter how overwhelming our predicament may be at the moment, He hears every single one of our cries. Today, let us surrender all of our frustrations at the foot of the cross and desire to completely trust in His salvific work as we begin our personal Lenten journey with Him.

sunday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Reflection Questions/Activity:

What are the lies that you are currently struggling with?

What is one truth that you would like to claim coming out of this new Lenten season?

monday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

PRAYER

Waiting can often feel unproductive and exhausting, especially when it brings us disappointment and heartbreak. In this season of apparent fruitlessness, perhaps we have found it difficult to reject the lie that God is with us and we ourselves have grown weary of waiting on or even pursuing the Lord.

Amidst these emotions and struggles, let us spend 10 minutes of our day to offer up this psalm as our prayer of trust that the Lord hears our every cry and delivers His promises in His time.

*“But I call upon God,
and the Lord will save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complain and my moan,
and he will hear my voice.
He will redeem my soul in safety
from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.
God, he who is enthroned from of old;
will hear, and will humble them -
because they do not change,
and do not fear God.*

*Cast your burden on the Lord,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.
But you, O God, will cast them down
into the lowest pit;
the bloodthirsty and treacherous
shall not live out half their days.
But I will trust in you.”*

- Psalm 55: 16-19, 22-23

tuesday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

RESOURCE

Most of us would have celebrated Ash Wednesday last week and have our foreheads signed with the cross made of ash. Today, let us recall that moment and reflect on what the two symbols, the ashes and the cross, really mean as we listen to Father Mike Schmitz's explanation on the significance of Ash Wednesday.

'The ashes mean I'm not who I should be, but the cross means I have a God who believes so fully in me that He is making me, right now, into the person He believes I can be.'

VIDEO: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASH WEDNESDAY
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPTcMWpHfKk>

REFLECTION

For most of my life, I believed that it is good enough to settle for mediocrity. I go to church every Sunday, I pray every night before I go to bed, I go for confession every month or so. That means I'm a good catholic, right? Perhaps not. My heart was far from God. As Father Mike said in his video, 'I love things I shouldn't love; I don't love things that I should love.' My lips pronounce the love of Christ, but my life does not. I eat the Bread of Life every Sunday, but I barely knew the taste of His immense love for me. I often feel ashamed that I am this way. This shame led to frustration because I believed that this is who I am. How can I be more than this? I've tried my best!

However, during a recent formation session in my university community, Jesus revealed to me a simple yet profound truth that He believes in me. He believes that I have the capacity to love Him and give myself fully to Him. He believes that I can be so radically in love with Him. He believes that I can do all that, even when I do not believe in myself. My Creator told me that I am made to be great, how then could I settle for less? Truly, the shame of sin is not just recognising that there is something wrong with our hearts, but also how incredible God called us to be.

As we heed the call to return to Jesus this Lent, let us remember who we are coming home to: a God who loves us unconditionally and is faithful to His promises. By returning to Him, we not only restore our relationship with Him but also our inheritance as His sons and daughters who are so wonderfully made. Wherever we are in our walk with Christ and however long we have strayed, let us remember that it is only in Him that we can live life to the full. Let us come humbly before Him who can turn our brokenness into beauty.

tuesday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Reflection Questions/Activity:

What are the things in your life that you desire to detach from?

Write a prayer of surrender asking the Lord to liberate you from these unhealthy attachments.

wednesday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

CHALLENGE: FASTING

Fasting opens our eyes to a world beyond ourselves. Have you ever gone a day feeling that you've missed every chance to be generous?

Often, it is because we have missed that first step: to be present to those whom God brings.

Beyond an act of penance, **fasting frees us to love others; by giving up what we love, we receive room to love.** Fasting does not have to be limited to food.

Today, offer to the Lord a thing to fast from and pray for the grace to be faithful.

Challenge of the day:

Fast from one meal today. Offer the fast for someone and spend that time praying for them.

thursday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 7:7-12

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.”

REFLECTION

When was the last time you sincerely asked God for something? Did you receive the very thing you asked for? In this passage, Jesus gives us the assurance of God’s willingness to fulfill our desires. He tells us that those who ask will never be disappointed because the generosity of God surpasses all expectations.

The invitation to request good things is extended not just to His closest disciples and the saints, but to everyone. Regardless of how regularly you go to church, how knowledgeable you are about the bible, or how close you feel to Him, God assures you that you can and should reach out to Him. We are all His children and He is a Father who withholds nothing from us.

Sometimes, God’s response to us may take a different form from what we have asked of Him. Our requests for success may be met with setbacks; peace with discomfort; answers with silence. But our relationship with God is more than just a series of smooth transactions. It is a constant renewal of our trust in Him even when we struggle to comprehend His ways. His ways are higher than our ways.

The graces of God are like boxes of treasures waiting to be opened, lying behind doors that are waiting to be knocked on. In order to experience the promises of God, Jesus challenges us to step out of our passivity and actively reach out to Him. Indeed, to “ask,” “seek” and “knock” is to be proactive and intentional in our relationship with God.

In a world that can be bleak and uncertain, God desires for us to be certain of His promises. The promises He makes are neither small nor empty, and we have every reason to expect the best from the Source of grace.

thursday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Reflection Questions/Activity:

What do you desire from God this Lent?

Spend 10 minutes in prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament (online), asking Jesus for that which you desire and listening to Him.

Link: 24 hours Online Perpetual Adoration
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz5gektkFOo>

friday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

CHALLENGE: ALMSGIVING

Almsgiving is the third pillar of Lent. Love of neighbour and works of mercy manifest the true love of God. Our interior conversion will not be complete without this last pillar. Today, ask the Lord who He is calling you to love. Ask Him for a spirit of generosity like the widow who donated “all she had” (Mark 12:44).

Challenge of the day:

Check in with a community member or relative and offer your help in prayer, fasting, or an act of mercy.

saturday.

OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

GUIDED EXAMEN

Find a quiet place and enter into the silence.

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you and enlighten your heart and mind as you begin this examen. Invite Him to guide your imagination as you enter into the scene:

You are a lone sojourner in a desert wasteland. Night has fallen. It is dark. Trudging through the cold desert night, you can almost feel the dryness and the monotony of the desert...as you move your feet through the dry coarse grains of sand, and the cold desert wind causes the dust to brush against your skin. There isn't a sound in the desert.

As you look up, you see nothing but more sand dunes all around. And the dust being blown up by the wind is only making it harder and harder for you to see. You are tired. Your hands and feet have grown so weak they're becoming numb. As you begin to think once again of your hopes, tears begin to well up in your eyes...

Suddenly, you sense a presence beside you. As you turn - it is the face of Jesus that you see. Without a word, he puts his cloak around you and embraces you. While the cold night wind continues to blow through the desert, you take a seat on the desert floor, as Jesus sits beside you.

Take some time to look back on your week.

- How has God been present to you this past week? What truths has He reminded you of/revealed to you?

- Ask God to reveal how the past week of prayer, fasting and almsgiving has been for you. Where have you failed? Where have you said 'yes' to God?

Surrender everything to God and allow Him to strengthen you again with the truths He has revealed to you this week.

Spend 10 minutes to journal on what you would like to thank God for this week. Finally, thank God for his love and goodness.