

Lent: A Time for Repentance, Reconciliation and Conversion

Lent is a time set aside by the church to respond to a clear call for repentance, reconciliation and conversion, to that movement away from sin and toward Christ. This is like a “retreat” and we can use it to prepare ourselves to fully celebrate the wondrous mysteries of the Triduum, culminating in the joy of Easter.

Repentance



The readings of Ash Wednesday remind us that we are called to repent and to be reconciled. If we take a closer look at the word “repent”, we find there is more than just recognition and sorrow for our sinfulness. Repentance comes from the Greek word *metanoia* which literally means “change of mind”. Because of our humanness, it is not always easy to change our sinful thoughts and actions to be in line with God. What we do know about our God is, He is patient and loving and waiting for us to change. We too need to be patient and loving toward ourselves as we take this time in Lent to do those things which will help us to change our minds back to God.

Reconciliation

During Lent we are also called to reconcile ourselves to God and each other. When I think of the word “reconcile” I think of repairing relationships. Sin damages our relationship with God and others. As Catholics, we are so blessed to have the sacraments available which fill us with grace and repair the damage we create through sin. Let us make time for the many opportunities we have in sacrament and liturgy during this Holy Season to repair our relationships with those we have hurt or those who have caused us pain. Let us also reconcile with God who is waiting for us with loving arms.



Conversion



Another term often associated with Lent we call “Conversion”. There are many references in scripture of powerful and grand conversion stories. One example is the event of Saul on the road to Damascus being confronted by Jesus. Blinded, Saul had a dramatic change of heart and subsequently became the great St. Paul, whose letters make up a large part of the New Testament. For new Catholic Christians, being baptized, confirmed and receiving Eucharist for the first time are significant milestones of faith. The power of these rites of initiation at Easter, are life-changing but they are only the

beginning.

Ongoing conversion is a process of many small steps. When we acknowledge weakness and sinfulness in our lives, conversion is “turning toward” God who is always turning toward us. It is the ongoing response of our whole person turning in faith and love to the God who loves us. It takes time to chip away at the barriers that block God from fully entering into our hearts. Each little conversion is both a birth and a death. We are born once again to a renewed newness of life with God. We die also to the sin that we have moved away from and we rise to a new way of walking with Christ.

Lent is a very appropriate time to continue the journey of conversion, where we work on those areas of darkness in our lives which need change.