

IMPACT

MARCH 2023

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

Open your ears.

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Listen. We began the season of Lent in the desert with Jesus. There, Jesus faced temptation and showed us how to avoid sin by staying focused on God and God's ways. From the desert, we go to a high mountain, where we hear the voice of God urging us to listen to Jesus.

Pray. During Lent, we set aside time for prayer, time to listen to God and search our life in response to God's loving presence. Christ speaks to us in word and sacrament, through loving relationships, in joyful and challenging times. We must be ready to listen.

Reflect. What is your desert? What tempts you? From what do you need to turn away in order to listen to the Lord more attentively and make a greater place for Jesus in your life?

Open your eyes.

"Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart."

See. During Lent, we are invited to open our eyes, to pay attention to the grace of God in our midst and see the needs of others. In the gospel we hear on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, the man did not ask to be healed. Jesus saw his need and reached out to him. As a result, the man who was born blind could see, but those around him were blind to the truth of the Good News of Jesus Christ. They couldn't believe what was before their very eyes. We may see the face of God in the poor and vulnerable, the eyes of a child, the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist. We must be ready to open our eyes to perceive God's

presence and to see others through the eyes of God, as precious and wonderful in his sight.

Fast. In Lent, we fast from a favorite food, beverage, screen time, or activity in order to experience more fully our hunger for God and to become more willing to live as God's holy people in the world.

Reflect. How often do you fail to see the goodness of God's love? In what ways might you more fully accept and share the mercy and forgiveness Christ freely gives?



Open your heart.

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Feel. Lent is a time in which to open our hearts to Christ, to risk trusting in God and allow Jesus to change us. The Samaritan woman did not at first understand what was happening to her as she spoke with the Lord at the well. Yet, she did not run away, and opened her heart to Christ. Not only was her heart moved and her life changed, so were the people of her town whom she told of her encounter with Jesus.

Give. During Lent, we give our time, money, and support to those who are poor, lonely, sick, in prison, the most vulnerable among us. We share our faith in Jesus and the impact of our faith in word and in deed, with friends, family, and especially with those to whom we reach out in charity this season.

Reflect. How might you open your heart to encounter Jesus this Lent? Who needs to know Christ's love and mercy through your giving and sharing? How might you go beyond yourself in care, compassion, and charity?

Impact
this
month

1. Open your ears.

Spend time in prayer. Share the depths of your heart with God. Listen to the Lord in Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, and in quiet reflection. Ask God to help you see your failings clearly. Seek forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

2. Open your eyes.

Fast from something that distracts you in order to see the goodness and beauty present in the people you love, in the sacraments, and in all of creation. Ponder your hunger for God and the mystery of Christ's love for you and for all.

3. Open your heart.

Make a promise to give to those in need in a special way this season. If at all possible, actively participate in service or ministry as well as giving money or material goods. Share the impact of your faith in Jesus through word and deed.

BE HONEST. TRUST IN THE LORD.

At first glance, it might not seem that the Samaritan woman at the well and Martha, the sister of Lazarus, have anything in common. The woman of Samaria had a difficult past that caused her to come to the well in the midday sun rather than enjoy the company of other women in the relative cool of the early morning hours. Martha and her siblings were often in the company of Jesus and were his friends.

The Samaritan woman initially responded to Jesus with disbelief. Jesus had broken all social norms in speaking with her. Jews did not associate with Samaritans and she was a woman, alone at the well. In the span of a few moments, however, her sparring became inquisitive; her honesty with Jesus turned incredulity into belief. "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?"



Martha was honest with Jesus, too. She expressed her frustration that the Lord had delayed coming to the aid of her brother Lazarus in his illness, prompting a dialogue in which she declared her belief that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. "I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

Martha and the Samaritan woman trusted that they could be honest with Jesus. Reflecting on their experiences with Jesus, we may ask ourselves if we are ready for our own encounter with the Lord. Are we honest with Jesus in prayer? There is nothing too big or small that the Lord is not ready to hear. Do we believe that we can bring whatever is in our life to him? Let us be honest and trust Jesus when he says, "whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus' thirst was not so much for water, but for the encounter with a parched soul...We, too, have many questions to ask, but we don't have the courage to ask Jesus! Lent, dear brothers and sisters, is the opportunity time to look within ourselves, to understand our truest spiritual needs, and to ask the Lord's help in prayer. The example of the Samaritan woman invites us to exclaim: "Jesus, give me a drink that will quench my thirst forever." (Pope Francis, March 23, 2014)



Ready to be forever changed

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

Have you noticed that people in Sacred Scripture often meet God on a mountain? God recognized Abraham's faithfulness in his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac on a mountain. Moses encountered God in the burning bush

on a mountain, and it was on a mountain that he received the Ten Commandments. Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a mountain, and there, they saw him transfigured, his glory shown in a powerful moment of God's presence. In all of these accounts, the mountain represents the place where earth and heaven meet, where people may encounter God's loving and powerful presence.

In his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus "stretched out his arms between heaven and earth," removing all separation between God and humanity. We experience this most profoundly in the Eucharist, in which we are offered Christ's very Body and Blood, are shaped and transformed, strengthened

to live as Christ's people in the world.

The apostles who saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain were never the same. They later recalled their experience, and in their telling, we sense their awe, the wonder they felt in this holy encounter.

As we hear their story, we might ask ourselves if we are ready to be forever changed by our encounter with God's love through Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Are we filled with awe and wonder? Are we prepared to be transfigured, more profoundly shaped by Christ? Are we ready to accept the call of Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and life?