

READY FOR THE JOURNEY?

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Coming Soon! Lent begins this week. This season does not stand alone. Rather, it derives its meaning from what follows. Our annual Lenten journey is all about exploring how we have lived our baptismal commitment to God this year. Its purpose is to prepare the Church, catechumens and the community of believers alike, for covenant-making and covenant renewal at Easter.

Every year the Church offers us a lengthy season of renewal - *40 days of Lent* to look deep into our hearts, to be reconciled to God and to others, culminating in a *3-day Easter feast*, Holy Thursday to Easter, to solemnly renew our commitment to God in Jesus Christ, then *50 days of celebration*. Yes, the whole Easter season, Easter to Pentecost, is one great celebration! *A total of 90 days*, a quarter of each liturgical year, is dedicated to the deepening and renewal of our life in Christ. Are you ready?

Clearly, diving into Lent is a challenge; it is also a gift of time to search deeply into your own heart to nurture your gifts and repent of your failings. Plan ahead. As you prepare for the journey, ask yourself: Am I a better person than I was a year ago? How have I grown in my relationship with God? How do I express it? How about your relationship with others – family members, co-workers, friends? Where is my growth?

One of the many gifts God has given to each of us is a lifetime capacity to grow, to become more fully the person God made us to be. Still, we know from experience that there's another side to that story. The age-old dilemma of knowing what is right, yet making bad choices. We are *all holy*, and we are *all sinners*.

Conversion is what the journey is all about. Conversion involves a reshaping of our consciousness, a transformation of our minds and hearts so that we see life in a new way. The gospel stories of Levi, the tax collector, the prodigal son or the woman taken in adultery have less to do with sorrow for a sinful past than with embracing a hope-filled future. Their responses to the call of Jesus became evident in their lives. Levi hosted a banquet, the prodigal returned home, and the woman went forth empowered by Jesus' word to sin no more.



Now it's our turn. It's time to get ready. To deepen our baptismal commitment to the Lord this Easter, we must have journeyed to a new level of awareness, a new level of Christian living during Lent. *So, repent and believe the Good News*, hear God's word and take the plunge. Make a choice to journey with Jesus to become your better self. Consider how you will express that newness in your everyday life throughout the year ahead. You still have a few days to get ready. Give yourself a gift. Take a few more minutes every morning or evening to pray. Talk to the

Lord. Ask God in his love for you, to shed light on your sins and resistances, to make you consciously aware of them. Name the gifts you see in yourself. Thank God for them and ask for the grace to empower others as you share them. Strive to hear his call in your life.

Deep within all of us there lies a desire for God. Let us be sensitive to our inward journey; it's "ups and downs" as we go forward together, supporting one another on our journey to new life.

