

2.15.2026 Quinquagesima (1 Corinthians 13:1; Luke 18:31)

*“Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again”* (Luke 18:31-33).

The season of Lent begins this Wednesday, and those words from our Gospel lesson bring to mind the way of the Cross, the sorrowful path of suffering that leads to the death of the Son of God on Calvary. Lent begins this Wednesday, and the first steps of our lenten journey will be taken in ashes and humble repentance as we reflect, not in a general sense about the brokenness of this world or fallen human nature, but instead, in the most personal way, we will be called to reflect on our own brokenness, our own wounded human nature, our own sinful rebellion against the God of Heaven and Earth.

We will begin our lenten journey on our knees in ashes and humble repentance, and then rise to walk with our Lord on the way of the Cross. We will stand in the crowd among some who triumphantly welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as the long-expected, promised Messiah, crying out, *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”* (Matthew 21:9), people who welcomed Him on Sunday with praises and palms, but on Friday rejected Him with shouts of *“Let Him be crucified!”* (Matthew 27:22-23). We will listen as the religious leaders ask Pilate to release to them Barabbas (whose name means “son of the father”), and in the same breath these men will demand that Jesus be crucified - the true, only-begotten Son of the Father. On our journey we will see our Lord mocked and beaten, spit on and scourged. We will watch as He so humbly takes up His Cross in order that He may lay down His life not only for the sins of the whole world, but for your sins and mine.

A newspaper editorial once asked readers to answer the question: “What’s wrong with the world?” G.K. Chesterton replied, “Dear sirs, I am.” Lent is a season for that kind of honest, self-examination, a 40 day journey in which we invite the light of God’s truth to shine into the depths our hearts, souls,

and minds, to the end that the One who knows us better than we know ourselves may reveal anything that's keeping us from a closer relationship with Him. What does God want to reveal to you this Lent?

St. John stated, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:8-9). In his inspired words we recognize Lent is a season in which we, like Chesterton, must turn away from self-deception and humbly confess our part in what's wrong with the world, but that kind of honest humility doesn't come naturally to us. Our fallen human nature rebels against an honest, humble confession and in Holy Scripture we find countless examples which reveal that truth, beginning with our first parents in Eden.

You'll remember that in the Garden, God said, *"You may eat freely from every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat..."* (Genesis 2:16-17), and later when God asked them if they'd eaten the fruit of that one tree (the only tree in the entire garden that God had commanded them not to eat from), instead of an honest, humble confession, Eve blamed the serpent. She said, *"The serpent deceived me, and I ate"* and Adam went even further. He blamed both Eve and God, saying, *"The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate"* (Genesis 3:12-13). This pattern of self-deception, rather than honest, humble confession, continued in their son, Cain. After Cain had murdered his brother, God came to him and asked, *"Where is Abel your brother?"* Cain replied, *"I do not know; am I brother's keeper?"* (Genesis 4:9).

Making excuses, blaming others, and refusing to acknowledge our own wrongdoing are all examples of the way humans deceive themselves instead of confronting sin head on with an honest, humble confession. These examples begin with our first parents, and continue from that day forward. We might also think of Sarah, who in her old age laughed at the promise of a child, but then lied to God and denied that she had, or Aaron, who crafted a golden calf for the Israelites to worship, and when Moses confronted him, he claimed that he just threw the gold that "the people had given him" into the fire and out came the calf, or King David, who tried to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba by having her husband called home from battle to spend the

night with her, and when that plan failed, David had one of his most valiant and loyal men, Uriah the Hittite, murdered.

Adam and Eve tried to blame their sin on another, Cain refused to confess his, Sarah denied that she'd sinned, Aaron made up a ridiculous story, David tried to cover up the sin of adultery with murder, and when you or I blame others, refuse to confess, deny that we've sinned, make up stories, or attempt to cover our sins with those that are even greater, we are in essence saying that we have no sin. If we choose to go down that road, we've deceived ourselves and the truth is not in us, and therefore we pray that by the grace of God we would walk a different path, beginning this Lent in ashes and humble repentance.

Lent is a season of spiritual discipline, a season, to use the words of St. Paul, for us to *"put away childish things"* (1 Corinthians 13:11), to stop deceiving ourselves and humbly confess our part in what's wrong with the world. Scripture declares the truth that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23), and if we will acknowledge that truth with a penitent heart, humbly confessing our sins unto Almighty God, He is *faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

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A good Lent begins on our knees in ashes and humble repentance, it continues as we journey with our Lord on the way of the Cross, and as we walk this path of suffering with Him, we are called to reflect on our own brokenness, our own wounded human nature, and to confess our own sinful rebellion against the God of Heaven and Earth. This is a difficult journey, but by God's grace with each step we see not only the agony of our Lord's Passion, but in His precious Death and Sacrifice we recognize the infinite height and depth and breadth and length of the love of God in sending His Son to die for us.

*"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again."*

Lent is a difficult journey, but take heart, because this path doesn't end in death and despair, for on the third day He shall rise again, and in the Risen Christ there is life eternal and love Divine.