



ASHES TO EASTER

A 40-day journey with Christ

WEEK 1

Welcome to the Season of Lent!

How is 2025 so far? It has only been a minute and yet, a lot has already happened. In this fast-paced, busy world we live in, we often have very small time for reflection and introspection. However, this Lenten season, may we take this opportunity to walk with Christ and reflect on His Paschal Mystery. As we enter the first week of Lent, may we discover the immense love of Christ and learn the importance of prayer and fasting.

MARCH 5, 2025

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face." (Matthew 6:17)

ST. AUGUSTINE PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

GOSPEL REFLECTION:

Today, Jesus speaks about the importance of prayer and fasting. He told the disciples not to be hypocrites, but to make our prayer and fasting a personal relationship with the Lord.

At the beginning of this year, I attended a program for the Full-time missionaries of our community called the School of Discipleship. It was facilitated by our Indian brethren. During the program, they placed an emphasis on intercessory prayer and fasting, reminding us that we can only win souls through kneeling. When they shared this with us, it struck me deeply. It hit me right in the heart. It made me realize that nothing will truly happen, no matter how well we conduct different programs in our mission work, if we do not pray and fast intentionally. All of it will be in vain.

The most essential thing in mission work is prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting will bring conversion to us, and eventually, to the world. As we commemorate Ash Wednesday, let us remember to pray and fast intentionally for the conversion of sinners and the healing of the sick.

WEEK 1

REFLECTION QUESTION:

What are your prayers and things that will offer this Lent season?

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, grant us the grace to be intentional in deepening our relationship with You, through our prayers and the little sacrifices we offer for Your greater glory. Amen.

WEEK 1

MARCH 6, 2025

Gospel Reading: Luke 9:22-25

Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

ST. AUGUSTINE PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

GOSPEL REFLECTION:

Our life on earth is shaped by the decisions we make. God, in His immense love for us, has gifted us with free will and intellect that we are to use to lead us closer to Him.

When I was younger, I made the decision to live a life of purity, a choice that began a lifelong journey. This commitment became my cross to bear. It is hard to live with the impurities of this world, of how it tries to change the way we think and live. It challenged my identity, the way I love others, and the way I wait for the one true love God has destined for me. My journey is not over, and the road ahead is long. It is an ongoing pursuit of holiness.

Today, let us remember that through our crosses, we are made holy. These are meant to bring us closer to the One who loves us most. Holiness requires firm decisions, and each day, we are called to choose Him, for He is our life.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

How is God calling you to deny yourself and carry your cross this lent?

PRAYER:

My God, help me to see what you are calling me to surrender to You.

WEEK 1

MARCH 7, 2025

Gospel Reading: Matthew 9:14-15

Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Matthew 9:15)

ST. AUGUSTINE PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

GOSPEL REFLECTION:

What if letting go meant receiving something greater?

In every activity in our community, from youth camps to events, the service team always practices fasting. It may be giving up colored drinks, secular music, or other comforts. But fasting is more than just restrictions; it is about making room for something greater. When we choose to have less for ourselves, we create space to give more—more time, more attention, and more love. It shifts our focus from what we lack to what we can offer, drawing us closer to God and others. Fasting is not just about sacrifice. It is about preparing our hearts to receive and share His love and grace more fully. Through this, we learn to rely on Him rather than on temporary pleasures. In the end, fasting strengthens our hearts, teaching us that true fulfillment comes from God alone.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

What is one habit or comfort you can give up to strengthen your relationship with God?

PRAYER:

Lord, give me the grace to let go of my selfish desires so that You alone may guide my life. Amen.

WEEK 1

MARCH 8, 2025

Gospel Reading: Luke 5:27-32

"I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners." (Luke 5:32)

ST. AUGUSTINE PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

GOSPEL REFLECTION:

I used to struggle accepting food that is offered to me. Sometimes, whenever our coordinator would offer me food that I know I like, I would decline. Sometimes because I feel I don't deserve to receive such food. What I end up doing is that I wait until the food is offered to me multiple times before accepting it.

In the same way, we sometimes feel the same way about the love of God. We keep on declining it because we feel undeserving of it. But regardless, Jesus continuously offers us His love because we are precisely the reason for His sacrifice. How lovely it is to know that a sinner such as I am, has enough space in the heart of Jesus that He came down from Heaven for my sake.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

How are you going to open yourself up to the love of God this Lent?

PRAYER:

Lord, grant me the grace to believe and trust in the immense love and mercy You have for me despite my trespasses. Amen.