

A TIME TO RENEW SPIRITUAL LIFE

“Behold, now is a very acceptable time.” (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Ash Wednesday (February 17th) is a very acceptable time to hear again that solemn reminder that we will pass from earthly life, and our bodies and all our earthly possessions will become a little bit of dust. It is the common fate for all who dwell upon the earth. Ash Wednesday is a very acceptable time to begin a 40-day program to care for and develop that spiritual part of us that will not turn to dust. Daily spiritual reading would be a good project; or Scripture study, Stations of the Cross, meditation or participating more fully at Mass. Maybe it would mean returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation after many years. Perhaps we've tried some of these and failed and feel discouraged. We need to try again, determined to be victorious this time. Ash Wednesday is a very acceptable time to renew our love and kindness to others and express our feelings through gentle words and caring deeds. It is Lent, the acceptable time for renewed spiritual life to begin again to develop within us.

Lord Jesus, as the Holy Spirit led you into the desert to fast and pray, lead me now into the disciplines of Lent so that I may be purified by your love. Free me from the tyranny of my desires and fears so that I may find in you all that I need to live a life of joy. Strengthen me to stand firm against temptations and open my heart to compassion for the poor and vulnerable. I pray all these things in your holy name. AMEN

Almighty God and Father, through your beloved Son I have been offered the gift of salvation. May my observance of this Lenten season help me to accept this gift and the transformation of my life that comes with it. May I take my faith more seriously and trust in you more deeply as I take up my cross with Jesus each day. AMEN

Good Catholic Books to Read for Lent

---NO GREATER LOVE by Edward Sri

This is a biblical pilgrimage that reveals Christ's amazing love for us. Dr. Sri guides you through the last hours of Christ's life. You will walk step-by-step with Jesus from the garden of Gethsemane to Mount Calvary. Every step of the way, Old Testament prophecies, messianic expectations, biblical symbolism, and historical context shed light on the mystery of Christ's suffering and death. Experience a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's immeasurable and unconditional love for you-grow closer to Jesus than you ever have before.

---GIVE UP WORRY for LENT by Gary Zimak

This combines practical spirituality, daily scripture readings, and simple action steps to help you kick the worry habit as part of your Lenten renewal. He shows you how to let go of the anxiety producing areas of life in order to find the lasting peace that comes from trusting God.

---JESUS, FRIEND of MY SOUL by Joyce Rupp

This is a meditation book for Lent and Holy Week. Each two-page daily reflection brings our attention to the Lenten season, providing reflections for growth and inviting us to follow Jesus and become more like him.

---WALK in HER SANDALS edited by Kelly M. Wahlquist

This book takes you deeper into your relationship with Jesus by helping you relate to him in a profoundly intimate way. Looking at six universal gifts of women through the eyes of women in the gospels, the book guides you on a prayerful and creative journey through the days of Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost. It will help you experience a conversion of heart and recognize your own giftedness.

---LENTEN HEALING (40 Days to Set You Free from Sin) by Ken Kniepmann

This book offers a twist to traditional Lenten fasting; instead of giving up chocolate, give up your sin. This daily Lenten devotional offers a unique approach to fasting, helping you reexamine the psychological and spiritual roots of sin in your life while sharing reflections and prayer exercises for overcoming sinful habits and acquiring virtuous ones.