

## **Lent - Repent and Believe in the Gospel**

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe** in the **Gospel.**" ... (Mark 1:15). Repent and believe in the Gospel is the theme of Lent. Lent is a time of grace. It is a time to be vigilant. It is time to grow in holiness. It is a time for atonement for our sins.

If there is no repentance, there is no salvation because nothing unholy can enter into heaven or be united with God. God has created us in His image, pure and immaculate, but by our weakness we have sinned and offended God. The mercy of God is so abundant that it embraces any sinner who repents. Jesus by the parable of the Prodigal son, teaches the mercy of God. All of heaven rejoices when the sinner repents and comes back to God.

We need repentance because Jesus himself told us. Although he has not sinned, he himself did penance for our sake and died on the Cross and Rose again and now he is giving us a share in his Resurrection. In order to receive the grace that Jesus is giving, we need to repent for our sins in faith.

The right response to the good news is simple and profound. We must repent and believe in the gospel. When Jesus said "Repent," He was talking about a change of heart, change of behavior, change of attitude, and for us to turn towards God. Repentance is an inner change that gives rise to new ways of living the Word of God. It is not limited to the past sins alone, but it goes further to modify one's life forever in conformity with the Word of God. Genuine repentance is an inner change of heart that produces the fruits of new behavior. Acting differently, speaking differently, and living differently are the inevitable outward result of being made completely different on the inside.

Repentance and faith go together because if you believe that Jesus is the Lord, who saves you, you have changed your mind about your sins; and if you repent, it's because you trust that Jesus is the Lord who saves you. Have you repented of your sins? Have you come to rely on Jesus alone for your salvation?

During this spiritual journey, we are all tempted in so many ways. Temptations are pleasing to the eyes. They are so captivating and seductive that we need a special time of the year called Lent. The purpose of Lent is to take time out of our work routines and look deep inside ourselves by fasting and prayer, so that we can more clearly see what is truly "in our hearts", and open our hearts to God and to the needs of those in pain around us as we remind ourselves of our true calling.

Temptations are the tests that God allows that we may desire God more than worldly desires. God is testing us to see what is in our hearts. Can you remain faithful to God? Can you keep your commitments and promises? Jesus Christ says to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you". Fear not the temptation, but be on your guard. Temptations are the tests and the challenges that we need to face to prove our love for God. We are not alone. God is with us.

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