

## **40 days and 40 nights... and Coronavirus...**

The season of Lent started on Ash Wednesday. We received the ashes on our foreheads with a reminder "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" and with that reminder, we started a 40-day journey with Christ in the desert. 40 days and 40 nights like one of our songs reminds us. How many Lents have we been through in our lives? How much have we been able to turn away from our sins and follow Jesus and His gospel in our lives? How many Lenten resolutions have we been able to fulfill and how many have we broken quickly?

Yes, the church is closed, and we have a very limited access to the sacraments, and we can't even be with our friends and parishioners that we love, but don't you think that this year can be very special for us? Yes, we are truly in the desert, just like Jesus, who had no food, who was not able to go to the temple to pray, who was tempted, who was not surrounded by His friends nor by the people who followed and listened to Him speak.

Each Lent is a reminder to us that we should stop for a moment and reflect upon our lives. We should try to join Jesus in the desert and spend more time with God, with prayer, reflection and trust that God can do things far beyond our imagination. So, when I reflect on the previous Lents of my life and all the Lenten promises and resolutions, I'm sure I made, how difficult it was to truly turn away from my sins and temptations and be more with God. We all know how busy this world is, we know how busy and crazy our lives can be -- our jobs, schools, always running around to fulfill our daily obligations. Yes, we did plan to be more with God, but we just couldn't slow down for long. We were not able to go with Him into the desert.

As a priest and pastor, I have experienced this yearly season of Lent which always seems to turn out busier than the year before. There are all the preparations for Holy Week and Easter, and all the devotions, meetings and confessions before Easter. But this year is very different, it's so much different! Why? Simply because we are dealing with coronavirus and so we are afraid. I also was pretty scared until I realized that instead of being anxious and complaining about all that is happening in our world, maybe God has given me this time and given all of you this time to be truly present with Him in the desert -- that desert which for many reasons eluded us in previous Lents.

So now we are forced to be in our homes, with people that we love, or alone with God. We are without access to so many things that we normally have. Today, God gives us this gift of 40 days and 40 nights to live even more fruitfully than before. I believe that from our Catholic perspective there couldn't be a better time for this lockdown than now in the season of Lent. What we couldn't fulfill before, now we are forced to do. And no, I am not happy about the things that are happening right now. I too am truly concerned about the health of my family and friends and of all of you our parishioners, but at the same time I believe that God is stronger than any present danger. I believe that He will help us and He will bring us back to normal again.

But for now, let's take advantage of this time. It is truly 40 days in the desert given to us by God. Let us take care of the things we had no time to do before, especially with our spiritual lives. Let us try to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the Gospel.

See you soon!  
Fr. Kris