

During Lent the Pastor's Letters will be from our Holy Deacons.

Many of us who began our Lenten experience at Our Lady of the Rosary just a few short days ago heard the words "Repent, and believe in the Bible."

The word "repent" – from the Greek word "metanoia" – means "to think again," or "to reconsider." In its religious context during this penitential season of Lent, repentance means to turn away from sin, to change whatever may be sinful in our lives to turn instead to God. Aware that we are all sinners, we need to remember the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners."

How, then, do today's readings on the 2nd Sunday of Lent reinforce the need for the change that repentance requires of us? In today's first reading, Abram, at the advanced age of 75, was called by the Lord to change everything about his life to follow him. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul affirmed that our citizenship is in heaven and encourages us to "stand firm in the Lord." And in the Transfiguration account from Luke's Gospel, the Father responds to Jesus' transformation with the words "This is my chosen Son; Listen to him."

If we are called to repent, if we are called to change our hearts to align them with God's plan for us during this Lenten season, what are we actually planning to do to achieve that goal? The Church offers us the Lenten formula of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to turn our minds and hearts to the Lord; and those who turn those goals into action will surely grow deeper in faith as we walk with Jesus toward Golgotha on Good Friday.

But for others who are seeking yet another way to turn to the Lord during these 40 days, reading a good Christian book or passages from the Bible each day can accomplish that Lenten goal.

If reading the Bible is your choice, perhaps the study of one of the four Gospels will serve best during Lent, culminating in the passages about Jesus' suffering and death during Holy Week.

The choice instead of a good Christian book might include "The Tears of Christ: Meditations for Lent" by St. John Henry Newman; "The Screwtape Letters" or almost anything else by C.S. Lewis; or "Aquinas' Lenten Meditations" by St. Thomas Aquinas. Or, for the truly dedicated reader of Christian literature, "The Brothers Karamazov" by Fyodor Dostoevsky; "Les Misérables" by Victor Hugo; G. K. Chesterton's "Orthodoxy"; or even "The Lord of the Rings" Trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Not to be forgotten are several offerings available in the narthex of the church written by our pastor and author-in-residence Fr. Dwight Longenecker. Each of them will offer a perspective that will in some way help us to accomplish our Lenten objective.

If none of those offerings are satisfactory, simply google Catholic Books for Lent for a seemingly endless choice of books for the season. Whatever Catholic offering you choose to read during Lent, your choice will enable you to draw closer to the Lord during these 40 days and, at the end of Lent, leave you with the satisfaction of having responded to the Lord in a positive and meaningful way.

Deacon Jerry Schiffer