

# Repent and Believe in the Gospel

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The season of Great Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, with the distribution of ashes from the previous year Palm Sunday burnt ashes. The celebrants say, “Repent and Believe in the Gospel” a statement of Jesus from the Gospel of Mark. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God invites back to him people who strayed away from Him, “repent.” In the first chapter of Prophet Isaiah we read, “Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool” (1:18). The Lenten Season creates a conducive environment for repentance and conversion so that we can celebrate the Pascal Mystery on Easter Sunday. In the scriptures, 40 days or years refers, a period that helps an individual or community to be formed, informed, and reformed. In short to have a new attitude and new perspective, especially in our relationship with God and each other. Therefore, Great Lent, reminds us the 40 days of Jesus’ fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his public ministry.

The Scripture readings of this Sunday remind us that God is true to his covenant with us. Regardless how far we stray from Him, God continues to call us back and set our feet on the path of “love and truth.” He has given us yet another chance to mend our ways with true repentance and conversion. St. Peter in his first letter reminds us that in spite of our being undeserved, “Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God” (3:18). Christ’s death on the cross gave life to us; dying with him from sin through water of baptism to celebrate with him victory over death. With him we can proclaim, “Death is swallowed up by victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55).

Traversing through the valley of death of COVID-19 pandemic, we have more reason to appreciate the gift of life and the call for conversion. In the responsorial Psalm we are assured of God’s mercy, “Good and upright is the Lord, thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and he teaches the humble his way.” As we have witnessed our fellow people falling victim to the pandemic, we are compelled to be grateful to God for his covenant, preserving us to witness his mercy and love.