



## Opening Prayer for Lent

Light a candle, observe a *minute of silence* then recite together:

**Loving and Merciful God,  
You give us these Holy  
Days of Lent for our  
conversion, in order to  
prepare for your  
Resurrection.**

**Help us to recognize your  
call each day so that we  
may one day rise to new  
life.**

**Keep us close to you and  
each other as we share  
faith, serve those in need  
and worship you in Spirit  
and in Truth.  
-AMEN**

# Seasons of Faith

March 12, 2017 ❖ Second Sunday of Lent 📖 Genesis 12:1-4, 2 Timothy 1:8-10. Matthew 17:1-9

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Every Lent, we Catholics are invited into a season of conversion; 40 days and nights of prayer, fasting and penance in which I've "given up" bad habits and naively hoped for a great vision that would bring me to my knees much like Jesus' faithful disciples in Matthew 17:1-9. I've come to realize that conversions with thunderous clouds that speak are few and far between. For most of us, conversion is a much slower process that may unfold across months, years or even a lifetime. My own conversion has been a slow evolution through many roles I've lived--- student, activist, lover of words, "extranjera", maestra, "honey bear" (my husband's nickname for me), budding academic, and advocate. Each of these formative roles came laden with ideas that defined my words and actions, taking me on many adventures that challenged and often pushed me to my limits. And, when I take a truly honest look at all these "roles", I've come to realize that "Christian" had never truly been at the center of these identities until my husband's recent journey through RCIA; and I, the "cradle Catholic", began learning with him, the neophyte.

It has been quite a challenge to unwind/ untangle and understand previous notions of who I thought I should be and truly "let go". To literally throw away trash bags of research papers and give away heaping boxes of books to have the space to sit and listen to the quiet voice of God's

love instead of building a fortress of research to defend myself. You see it's not so easy for this Chicana who has been struggling her whole life to learn how to surrender and truly accept the invitation to walk with Christ and "Go forth... to a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). What should I pack? Will I need to learn a new language? Who will help me? All the anxiety that comes with previous notions of journeys is dismissed when I choose to sit, listen and not be afraid. You see, I don't have to earn God's love. Nor do you! His love and grace is a constant gift that is ready and waiting for you right now as you read these words (2 Timothy 2:9). You just have to accept it.

This beautiful surrendering love is the most present in the newest "role" I've accepted, that of Mother. While challenging in EVERY aspect, being Mom has been the most fecund and healing process combining/aligning so many of my previous roles. Amen! With the lens of conversion, I've come to realize that I create, advocate, teach, travel and learn on a daily basis as Mom. God's perfect love and grace is gifted in my children's innocent eyes full of love.



My prayer for you and me is this:  
May God give me the courage to let go, unwind and let go. And, accept Him and all his glory, grace and love. I am not "my things" (books, papers, credits, degree). I am a child of God ready to live the life He has designed for me. Amen.

## Questions for Sharing

- 1. For Genesis:** We hear the Lord's promises to Abram before he obediently does as He asked. In what ways have you listened and followed God recently? What has He led you to do?
- 2. For Timothy:** Paul says "bear your share of hardship for the Gospel". What hardships have you encountered because of your faith and belief? Who or what helped you during this time?
- 3. For Matthew:** The Lord says, "Rise and do not be afraid." Share a time that you overcame fear and doubt. Who or what helped you not be afraid?
- 4. For the Reflection:** Which role in your life helps you encounter God in a special way? How does this happen?

# Walking the Talk

## Be Not Afraid and Listen

This week's Sunday Gospel describes to us the transfiguration of Jesus. We hear about the glorious experience that Peter, James and John had and we can only imagine how they felt seeing Jesus' face shine in front of them. We hear God say these important words, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased—listen to him!" And Jesus tells his disciples "Get up, Don't be afraid." This week:

- Spend some time in quiet reflection listening to what God has to tell you. Many times we spend most of our time praying to God with many words, asking Him for what we most need and we don't stop to listen. He may be guiding us to see His shining face somewhere unexpected, so let us listen and not be afraid.

# Committed to New Life

## Give Welcome and Be Encouraged

*"May the Church be a place of God's mercy and hope, where all feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live according to the good life of the Gospel. To make others feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged, the Church must be with doors wide open so that all may enter and we must go out through these doors and proclaim the Gospel." (General Audience, 6/12/13)*

- Think of someone you know that needs encouragement or some words of wisdom to help them accomplish something they are working on. Throughout the week, send them emails, texts, or visit them to share that you are thinking of them. If it's possible, you can even use post-it notes to discretely place these words, phrases and prayers of support and encouragement in places where they will find them, such as on their desk, car windshield or bedroom door. These little surprises will help them be successful in their endeavors.



# Strength for the Journey

## Seasonal Rituals To Celebrate Faith and Life

### Fostering Growth in Our Church

(For the prayer center, include a cross, a bible and a candle. You may also include a purple tablecloth, some rocks or a dry branch to observe the Lenten Time. Make small cards with the following scripture reference written on them. Place the cards in a basket on the prayer center)



*Abraham: Gen. 12:1-4a  
Amos: Am 7:14-15  
Requirements: Lk 9:57-62  
Few Chosen: Mt 22:1-14*

*Moses: Ex 3:10-12; 4:1, 10-12  
Isaiah: Is 6:8  
The Cross: Mt 16:24-28*

Leader: We gather today to continue to pray for a much needed growth in our church: to the priesthood, religious life, lay ministry, or matrimony and family life. We are all called to holiness, called to a vocation that can lead us closer to God.

**All: Lord, that with your help we may discover our vocation in life. We ask that you give us the courage to answer that call, so that Your church may grow, not only in numbers, but also in faith.**

*(Ask each participant to approach the prayer center and take a small card from the basket. Ask them to pray with this scripture during the week. These scriptures may help them as they discern their vocation in life.)*

**Reader 1:** Lord, there are so many things in life that we do not understand, so many questions about the future that we ask. What is Your plan for us? What is the work You want us to do?

**Reader 2:** All we really know is that You love us. Show us the road You want us to walk— to fulfillment, to happiness, to holiness.

**All: Whatever vocation you may be leading us to, give us the strength to say "yes" and the grace to begin to prepare ourselves for the challenge of a life spent in Your service and in the care of Your people. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.**