
– Lent –

The Path of Sorrow and the Gateway to Joy

The word “Lent” appears to have been taken from the Old English word *lencten*, which means “lengthen.” It refers to the lengthening of the daylight hours that occurs in the northern hemisphere as spring approaches. The Lenten season takes place during that period of the year in spring.

Like Advent, Lent is a penitential season, one in which we are to humble ourselves before God as we note the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ who came in flesh and blood as our Savior from sin. During Advent we often light an Advent wreath which reminds us that, with each new candle which is lit, God’s mystery unfolds before our eyes until we see the fulfillment of God’s promise to send His Son in the flesh. So also, during Lent, as the daylight periods lengthen we are reminded of the unfolding of events which culminate in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lent is a journey. It begins with the story of the Fall of man, and reminds us how, on that sad and tragic day, God in love gave the promise of a Savior who would crush the devil’s power. But He taught that the Savior Himself would be wounded in the process. The Lenten road would, from that moment on, point the human race toward the Savior. It gave to Adam and Eve, and to all their descendants, a bright ray of hope shining through the night of sin. The promise of the Christ would be confirmed again and again as God’s messengers, the prophets, would foretell His coming. Bit by bit, verse by verse, the prophecies would unfold, revealing the coming fulfillment of the Savior who would not only be born in human flesh and blood, but who would suffer, die, and shed His blood for the sins of the whole world. Lent is the pathway to the cross. It shows us how dark and horrible our sin really is as we see our innocent Savior brought to trial and condemnation for our wickedness. It reminds us of all that our dark deeds deserve, as the holy Son of God cries out from the cross, *“My God, my God! Why have you forsaken Me?”* It shows us that the wages of sin is death, as the corpse of the Lord of life is placed in a cold tomb.



However, as we celebrate Lent, it is always with the relief that the path does not end at the cross. The events of Lent, much like the candles we light at Advent, reveal God’s mystery—all that the Savior did to take away our guilt and sin. Even though the path appears to grow darker as we near the cross, we know that Jesus did not remain in the grave. There is, beyond the cross, the light of the empty tomb. Jesus rose triumphantly from death. Lent prepares us for the great celebration of the Resurrection which proves that we really are forgiven. Eternal life is ours since Jesus’ perfect life and innocent death was dedicated to us. By His wounds we are healed.

Let us, then, take the time, during this penitential season of the Church Year, to reflect on the Lord’s great love toward us. As we look with awe toward the cross, let us say with St. Paul, *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”* (Galatians 6:14).