



Prepare to Enter the Desert

Leader: Lent is a sacred proving ground for men of faith. It is a season when God invites us to step away from noise, pressure, and performance, and to stand honestly before Him. Throughout salvation history, God has formed men in the desert - places of testing, purification, and decision.

To “**Follow Jesus into the Desert**” is to allow God to strengthen what is true within us, confront what weakens us, and shape us into men in ministry who lead with humility, courage, and love.

This mini retreat invites you, as men engaged in ministry, to enter Christ’s forty days in the wilderness - not as spectators, but as disciples preparing to serve others. May this time deepen your personal faith and sharpen your ability to walk with parishioners as they face deserts of their own.

All: Lord Jesus, lead us into the desert with You. We come before You as men seeking integrity, wisdom, and strength rooted in You alone. Strip away what distracts us, what feeds pride, fear, or false control. Teach us to stand firm in faith, honest in prayer, and generous in service. Give us the courage to face our weaknesses without hiding, the humility to depend on Your grace, and the resolve to follow wherever You lead.

In the quiet of this desert, form us into men after Your own Heart - faithful sons of the Father, trustworthy brothers to one another, and servants of Your people. May we leave this place renewed, ready to lead others toward hope, healing, and life in You. Amen.

Why Does God Lead Us In the Desert?

Reader 1: In Scripture, the desert is where God prepares His servants for mission. Moses was shaped in Midian before leading Israel. David fled into the wilderness before becoming king. Elijah encountered God not in wind or fire, but in a whisper (1 Kings 19:11–13). The desert reveals who we truly rely on.

Jesus Himself entered the desert after His baptism. “Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert” (Luke 4:1). There He faced hunger, temptation, and isolation - not to prove His strength, but to anchor His mission completely in the Father’s will.

Reader 2: For men, the desert is not an escape from responsibility - it is preparation for it. In the desert, false strength is exposed, and true strength is forged. Here we learn to lead not from ego, but from obedience; not from control, but from trust.

To follow Jesus into the desert means:

- Allowing God to purify our motives and intentions.
- Choosing discipline that frees us to love more fully.

- Learning to listen before we speak or act.
- Trusting that God works powerfully even when progress feels hidden.

The desert trains men to become steady guides for others.

Let us Walk the Desert Together

(At your table or as a group, go through each of the 7 steps.
Note that some steps are done in meditation.)

1. Crossing the Desert Threshold: A Willing Yes

Create a space of focus and reverence. Silence distractions. Place a crucifix or Bible nearby. Stand or sit with an awareness that you are choosing to enter holy ground.

Pray together: **“Father, here I am. Lead me where You need me to go. Shape me into the man You are calling me to be. Amen.”**

2. Listening to the Word That Forms Men

Read slowly and prayerfully:

- Deuteronomy 8:2–3
- Psalm 25:4–5
- Luke 4:1–13

Reflect and share:

- What strikes you in these readings?
- How does God use hunger, waiting, or testing to teach trust?
- Where is Jesus showing you how to lead in ministry through obedience?
- What word or phrase stays with you – compels you in ministry?

3. Naming The Deserts We Cross

In silence, bring before God the deserts you carry; fatigue, doubt, resentment, overwork, fear, or discouragement in ministry.

Reflect:

- Where do I feel stretched, dry, or resistant?
- Where am I tempted to rely on myself rather than God?
- How might God be working within my deserts?

Offer these deserts to the Lord as an act of trust.

4. Standing Still Before God in My Deserts

Enter the next five minutes in prayerful silence – not to solve problems or plan ministry, but to remain before God as a man willing to offer himself in ministry.

If your mind wanders, gently return to a sacred phrase such as:

“Here I am, Lord,” -or- “The Lord is my portion.”

Let silence become a place of rest rather than effort.

5. Discipline That Creates Space for God

Reflect, Pray and Share:

Men in ministry are formed through discipline. Choose a fast that is realistic and meaningful - food, media, habits, or comforts.

Consider:

- What will I fast from this Lent?
- How will this fast sharpen my prayer and service?
- How can this discipline help me better serve others?
- What inner resistance does this fast reveal?

Let fasting become an offering, not a burden.

6. Facing Temptation as a Servant-Leader

Reflect, Question Yourself and Pray:

Reflect on Jesus' temptations:

- Comfort without trust
- Faith without surrender

Ask yourself:

- As a man in ministry, when am I tempted to control rather than serve?
- Where do I seek results instead of faithfulness?

Pray: "Lord, give me Your mind and heart. Teach me to lead as You lead."

7. Strengthened for the Mission

Conclude with gratitude and intercession - for your brothers here, for your parish, and for those you serve. Pray together:

"Lord Jesus, strengthen us for the work ahead. May what we gain in the desert bear fruit in love, patience, and faithful service. Amen."

Stepping out of the Desert

Leader: The desert is not the destination - it is the forge. Jesus emerged from the wilderness "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14), ready to serve, heal, and proclaim the Kingdom. As men of ministry, we leave the desert not hardened but clarified. What we learn here equips us to walk beside others in their struggles, to lead with integrity, and to witness to hope beyond Lent.

Carry forward the discipline, silence, and trust shaped here. Let your strength be gentle, your leadership faithful, and your service rooted in Christ.

All: Lord Jesus, thank You for meeting us in the desert. Seal in us what You have taught us - courage, humility, and trust. As we step forward, make us men who serve with compassion, lead with faith, and love with perseverance.

May our lives point others toward You, now and always. We place our ministry, our families, and our parish in Your hands. Lead us onward, Lord, from the desert into life. Amen.

Resources to Promote a Deeper Lenten Experience

- ◆ Keep a Lenten journal, noting moments of grace, challenge, and growth.
- ◆ Pray the Stations of the Cross, especially focusing on Jesus' perseverance.
- ◆ Utilize "Mary's Way of the Cross" by Richard Furey. For your stations of the cross, on one Friday, follow Jesus on his journey to Calvary through the eyes of his mother, Mary.
- ◆ Attend daily Mass or Eucharistic Adoration.
- ◆ Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for a fresh start.
- ◆ Practice almsgiving: offer time, resources, or compassion to someone in need.
- ◆ Connect with a spiritual director or trusted friend for encouragement.



Lord, help us to see the Holy Season of Lent as a time of spiritual renewal, rather than a time of deprivation. Amen.

<https://catholicminiprayerretreats.org/>

