



Entering Lent Through the Desert

Leader: Lent is a sacred season of grace - a time to slow our pace, open our hearts, and renew our trust in God. For seniors, it is a powerful invitation: to walk with Jesus into the desert, not by physical endurance, but by faithful reflection, attentive prayer, and loving surrender.

To “**Follow Jesus into the desert**” is to draw near to Him with body, mind, and spirit. It is in these quiet moments - free from distractions and worldly concerns - that God strengthens our souls, renews our hope, and teaches us how to love more fully. Our lifetime of faith, experience, prayer and memories, and faithful devotion become gifts, both for ourselves and for the Church, as we continue to serve one another in tangible and prayerful ways.

All: Lord Jesus, I come to You as I am - grateful for the life You have given me, aware of my limitations, and yearning to follow You more closely. Lead me into the quiet desert of my heart, where Your love dwells and speaks tenderly. Teach me to release distractions, regrets, and impatience. Strengthen my body and soul to serve others, to love faithfully, and to deepen my communion with You. Thank You for Your presence in my life already. Help me to respond more fully to Your grace, drawing near to You each day, and sharing Your love generously with those around me. Amen.

God Speaks Gently in the Desert

Reader 1: In Scripture, the desert is a place of transformation. Elijah heard God not in wind or fire, but in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11–13). The desert calls us to attentiveness, patience, and trust.

Jesus entered the desert after His baptism, guided by the Spirit (Luke 4:1–4). He prayed, fasted, and surrendered completely to the Father. There He gained strength, clarity, and purpose - lessons we can carry into our own lives.

Reader 2: For seniors, the desert may take different forms: slowing down, facing limitations, or navigating transitions in health and daily life. Yet these “deserts” are holy ground. They remind us that our spirits can grow even when our bodies are limited. In the desert, we learn to trust God’s presence, establish habits of prayer and gratitude, and offer our hearts in service to others.

To follow Jesus into the desert means:

- **Reflecting on the lessons of our journey with Him**
- **Expressing gratitude for His presence in our lives**
- **Using our faith to strengthen and serve fellow members of our community**

The desert is not emptiness; it is preparation, growth, and renewal.

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

1. Preparing One's Heart for the Desert

Create a prayerful space. Silence all devices. Light a candle. Place a crucifix or image of Christ before you. Keep a Catholic Bible nearby.

Invoke the Holy Spirit with this simple prayer:

"Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love." Amen

Meditative Reflection:

- What distractions in my life prevent me from fully following Jesus?
- How can I simplify my day-to-day life to open more space for God?

2. Listening to God's Word in the Wilderness

Read quietly or listen as someone proclaims:

• **Psalm 92:13–15, Isaiah 46:4, or Luke 4:1–4**

Reflect gently:

- What comforts and encourages my spirit in these words?
- How has God's faithfulness revealed itself in my life over the years?

3. Naming Your Deserts of Today

Bring before God what weighs on your heart.

- Where do I feel weary, uncertain, or isolated?
- How can I use my experiences, wisdom, and presence to strengthen others?

Activity:

Write down one challenge or burden and one way you can use it as a source of prayer or service for another person. Keep this as a reminder of God's work in your life.

4. Stepping Out of the Desert with Jesus

Reflect, Pray and Share:

Fasting is a concrete expression of interior desire. As you lightly fast, do so to remind you of your dependence on God.

- What small sacrifice or habit can I embrace this Lent to draw nearer to God?
- How can I turn prayer, reflection, or service into a daily routine that strengthens my faith?
- In what ways can I support fellow seniors in their spiritual journey through encouragement, prayer, or companionship?

Stepping Forth from the Desert to Light

Leader: Jesus did not remain in the desert; He emerged strengthened, ready to serve and bring hope to the world. So too, seniors are called to step forth - not in great activity, but through faithful presence, prayer, and loving witness. Your years of faith, your sacramental life, and your service to others are invaluable gifts to the Church. By drawing near to Jesus, simplifying your life of distractions, and offering your prayer and care to those around you, you continue to build faith, hope, and love.

All: Lord Jesus, thank You for walking with us into the quiet places of our lives. Help us carry the lessons of this retreat into every day, to live as Your faithful children, to love and serve one another, and to deepen our communion with You. May our lives remain a testament to Your mercy.

