



Thy
Kingdom
Come

A Lenten Journey

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Let's Begin the Journey

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ■ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

When Jesus begins his public ministry, he announces that the Kingdom of God is at hand. The desire for God to make things right, to restore integrity to a world broken by sin, was now pushing toward fulfillment in the person of Jesus himself. The only adequate response to this game-changing news was to get our house in order, to repent of our sins and to entrust ourselves to the power of the Kingdom made present in Jesus.

Benedict XVI, the pope emeritus, likes to say that to be a Christian is to become a Christian over and over again. This speaks both to our tendency to go off the rails and to the opportunities available to get back on track. Lent is the privileged time to get ourselves in sync with God and the great good God desires for us. Let's begin the journey.

*Dear
God,*

Thank you for the grace of a fresh start. Help me to be especially attentive to your Word during these days, present in the Scriptures and in the needs of those around me. Amen.



The Way to Life

Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.

■ DEUTERONOMY 30:19

Right here at the beginning of Lent, we are confronted with a choice. Notice that God never cancels out our freedom, never imposes the Kingdom. What we make of this season will depend on us in cooperation with God's grace.

The decision is a matter of life or death. The way to life is to hold fast to God, to walk in his ways. For us Christians, that means to follow the path of Jesus and to let go of those things that keep us attached to ourselves. This is the itinerary that lies before us: Detachment from self for the sake of a greater attachment to Christ. Taking up our cross every day conforms our lives to the pattern of the Master's own itinerary. This is the way to life and to the Kingdom.

*Dear
God,*

I thank you for showing me the way to the Kingdom. So often I chase after things that lead me away from the path to life. Day by day, step by step, may I open myself to self-sacrificial love. Amen.



Why We Fast

Is this the manner of fasting I wish...?

■ ISAIAH 58:5

Lent calls us to the practice of fasting, not to score points in heaven, nor—God forbid—to win the applause of others. We fast because we are made for something greater than any of the pleasures this world has to offer. What else can make sense of our voluntarily refraining from things which are good in themselves than to make room for the greatest of all good—the Kingdom of God made present within us and around us.

So we fast in order to expand our desire.

The Kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

What is it, we may ask, that stifles our longing for what God alone can give us? Maybe it is a sensual pleasure, but maybe it's greed or pride or self-pity. From what shall we fast this year?

*Dear
God,*

Thank you for revealing the depth of your love. Teach me to direct my heart toward the good things you have in store for those who love you. Amen.



A Desire for Something More

Leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him.

■ LUKE 5:28

In the most literal sense, not many of us are in a position to leave everything behind to follow Jesus. That would conflict with the responsibilities given to us to care for those we love. In Matthew's case, among the entrapments he leaves behind is a disreputable profession that enriched him at the expense of his own people. Some things are worth giving up.

But for what? Or, better, for whom? What is it that made Jesus' call so compelling? There is a mystery in this, but it must have had something to do with the attraction of Jesus' goodness meeting the desire for "something more" residing in Matthew's heart.

This is a good place to begin our Lenten adventure: to touch base with our desire for something more and to allow ourselves to be drawn toward the light of Christ. What, then, should we leave behind?

*Dear
God,*

Thank you for calling me into your service. I am no worthier than Matthew, the tax collector. Help me to see my need and to make room for the insistent promptings of your grace. Amen.



Aligning with God's Kingdom

If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.

■ LUKE 4:3

Let's get this out of the way. The temptations of Jesus were not shadow boxing. They were anguishing and gut wrenching, made so by everything that gives temptation its power: the attraction of what is offered—that is, temporal power vs. the humiliation of the Cross—and the wherewithal to make it happen. At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus was defining his mission by affirming whom he was going to serve. It was an act of sovereign freedom.

In its call to conversion, this is what makes Lent so clarifying. To align ourselves with God's Kingdom is to decide in favor of God's loving will for our lives and against all those forces that would have us serve other gods. As Jesus was accompanied by the Spirit, our moving away from evil and toward the good is strengthened by the sacramental life of the Church and the support of a good community.

*Dear
God,*

Thank you for the example of Jesus, whose “no” was “no” and whose “yes” to doing your will was a resounding “yes.” Help me to stay close to him in the daily struggles of my life. Amen.



The Final Judgment

Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me. ■ MATTHEW 25:45

Sheep and goats. Talk about clarifying. If you have any doubts about the standards of judgment for entrance into the Kingdom, Matthew's Last Judgment scene could hardly be clearer (Matthew 25:31-46). We will be judged according to the ways in which we have treated the "least" of our brothers and sisters.

At the heart of the scene is a startling identification. To the extent that we fail to honor the claim that the suffering members of the Body of Christ make on us, we are guilty not so much of a violation against some abstract principle of social justice. More than that, we have committed a personal offense against Jesus himself, who has become one with the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the ill, the prisoner.

In the face of the downtrodden, we encounter the face of Christ.

*Dear
God,*

**Thank you for
showing the way
to the Kingdom.
As your face
is turned
toward me in
my weakness,
so may I turn
toward those
who are in need.
Amen.**



Be Men and Women of the Kingdom

...thy Kingdom come... ■ MATTHEW 6:10

Teach us how to pray, the disciples ask. Jesus obliges by giving them words to say, and in those words, the essentials for a child of God in relation to the Father. This is really all that we need. Yet by years of repetition, it's possible to lose sight of what a great gift this is. But its very repetition has the power to shape and form us into the open-handed and open-hearted people we are meant to be.

How do we become men and women of the Kingdom? The Church's answer during this season is by fasting, by giving alms and by prayer. The prayer for the coming of the Kingdom, right there at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, tells us that the building up of the Kingdom is, first of all, God's work. Our desire for that Kingdom needs to be matched by the intensity of our prayer for it.

*Dear
God,*

Thank you for teaching us how to pray. I want those familiar words to insinuate their way into my daily living. Give me the grace of an attentive heart. Amen.



Looking for a Sign?

...there is something greater than Solomon here.

■ LUKE 11:31

Jesus criticizes his generation for looking for a sign, and we wonder why. We might ask if we are sometimes guilty of this ourselves. We are not immune from a “show me” attitude. How often do we tell God, at least implicitly, that we will believe as long as God fixes a broken relationship or a loved one in the throes of an addiction? *What have you done for me lately*, we seem to say, and we act as though God were the last emergency number on our cell phone.

That’s not the way it works with discipleship.

When we respond to God’s call to become co-workers in the building up of God’s Kingdom, there are no strings attached. The pattern of Christ’s life becomes the pattern of our own, and the mystery of his death and resurrection the sign that alone illuminates our way.

*Dear
God,*

Thank you for your call to discipleship. Help me during this Lenten season to follow the path of your Son’s self-sacrificing love with courage and humility. Amen.





Do you have a desire for something more this Lent? Journey with Fr. Dennis Gallagher as he invites you to make “Thy Kingdom Come” a central theme in your life as you prepare for Easter. To align ourselves with God’s Kingdom is to decide in favor of God’s loving will for our lives, and against all those forces that would have us serve other gods. “Thy Kingdom Come” is a call to conversion and renewal by bringing about the Kingdom of God within us and around us.

This 6-week page-a-day devotional features daily Scripture verses, reflections, and prayers written by Fr. Dennis Gallagher, AA, Provincial of the Augustinians of the Assumption.

This book, along with many other *Creative Communications for the Parish* products, is available on [amazonkindle](#) and [nook](#) by Barnes & Noble