

Celebrating Our Lord

Great Lent

UNIT

3

Lesson
Three



Prayer Starter

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...

Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us together to share ourselves with each other as you have shared yourself with us. We hope to know your love and live a faithful life. Help us to use the season of Great Lent to learn more about praying and giving and being true disciples. Amen.

Daily Bread

1. What is Great Lent?

After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit sent Jesus out into the desert to spend time alone. There he could think about his mission to spread the word of God. He was there for forty days and during that time he was tempted by the devil. This story is told in three of the Gospels of the New Testament.

We base our own preparation during Great Lent on this event in Jesus' life.

Great Lent is the forty days before Easter. That is almost six weeks! We use this time to reflect on our relationship with God and prepare for Easter.

During Great Lent we want to think about how to become true disciples, followers of Jesus. We do this through prayer, good deeds, and worship in order to be closer to God.



2. Why do we fast during Great Lent?

"Fasting" is eating less or not eating at all for a time. Jesus did not eat during his time in the desert. During Great Lent, we try not to eat meat for these 40 days. This is a way to remind ourselves of a simpler life. It's also a way to appreciate the abundance that God has given us.

3. Why do we give something up or try to change our ways?

We give something up that we feel is important. Maybe it's spending time on the phone or watching certain TV programs. When we do without it, we find out two things: 1)

Maybe these things are not as important as we think they are! and 2) we can have a new appreciation for how much we enjoy them and can thank God.

We often take things in our lives for granted – such as having enough food, being able to play

our video games, or eating sweets. We can appreciate something more if we understand what it feels like to be without it. It also teaches us how, sometimes, we take more than we need for ourselves. There are people in the world who do not have even the basics, while we have everything we need. This can teach us to feel compassion for others in need and move us to be more giving and helpful to others.

4. Why do we give to good causes?

Lent is a time we want to spend less time and money on ourselves and more on God and others. There are so many people who have less than we do; Lent is a good time to think of and care for these.



SCRIPTURE SOURCE

Jesus returned from the Jordan where he was baptized. He was led by the Spirit to the desert for forty days where he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'People do not live on bread alone.'"

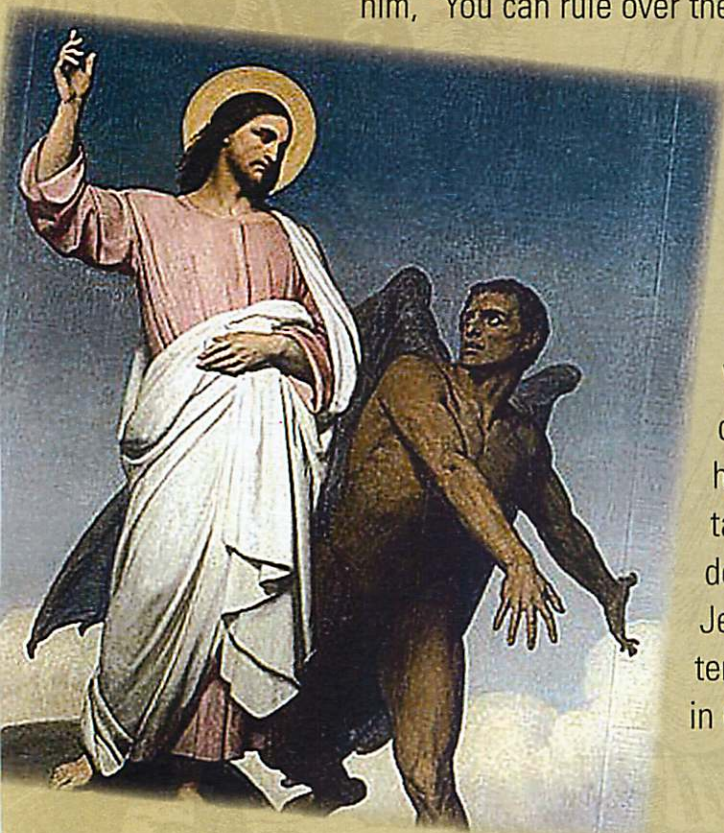
The devil led him up to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "You can rule over them all, if you worship me."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Then the devil led him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down and nothing will happen to you." But Jesus said:

"The Bible tells us not to test God." *Luke 4:1-12*

We often think that it was easy for Jesus to do what he did because he was God. But as a human being, he actually had a choice of how to live. We all have a choice to use our talents and skills in a positive way or a selfish way. The devil tempted Jesus to use his power for his own glory, but Jesus knew himself well enough to fight the devil's temptations. He knew that life was better when it was lived in God's way.



In the Armenian Tradition

During Great Lent in the Armenian Church, we have Bible readings each Sunday that focus on different parts of the Bible. Each story is meant to teach us how we should live and what we need to do to grow closer to Jesus.

The Sundays of Great Lent

- **Poon Paregentan** (not a Sunday of Great Lent but an important Sunday right before Lent begins) *recalls.....the happy, innocent life of Adam and Eve in Paradise.* (Genesis 2)
- **Sunday of the Expulsion** tells us about...*the loss of that original happiness through pride and disobedience. We are not going to lose Paradise forever; we are on the road home.* (Genesis 3)
- **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** tells the story*of a lost son who returns to his father and family home in sorrow and penitence. How great is the father's love and forgiveness! This is a lesson on the nature of God's love both for the "lost" and for those who never stray.* (Luke 15:11-32)
- **Sunday of the Steward** reminds us that.....*we need to be as smart about our spiritual lives as we are about everything else.* (Luke 16:1-13)
- **Sunday of the Judge** tells the story of how.....*if we keep praying from the heart we will always get God's attention* (Luke 18:1-8)
- **Sunday of Advent** is dedicated to....*The Second Coming of Christ that will bring in a new era, a new heaven, and a new earth. Then there will be no need for "Lent" since we will be in total and joyful union with God's will.* (Matthew 22: 34-23:39)



Did you know...!?

St. Gregory of Narek was a monk, teacher, and poet who lived in the 900's. That's over 1,000 years ago! He was born in Narek and became a student in the monastery of the same name (near the famous Armenian lake, Van). He wrote about the Bible among many other topics. But his most famous poems are the hundreds that are collected in *The Book of Lamentations*. A "lamentation" is a song or poem expressing deep sadness.

The sub-title of this book is *Speaking to God from My Heart*. Here is a part of Prayer 61:

Like the leaves of the cedar tree
That come streaming down in the howling storm,
The evil spirit tries to break
The fruit-filled branches of my life...
The life you shaped with your loving hands, God.

Restore these broken branches
And let them live again
Under your good care, o Christ our King,
Who gives us all good gifts.





CELEBRATE WITH GOD

Caterpillars go into a chrysalis – a little pod, where they can be alone and use what they have inside themselves to become something even more beautiful than they were. When they come out they are able to fly! Jesus came back from the desert, resisting all temptations and ready to begin his mission. The caterpillar comes out of the chrysalis ready to fly. And we can also come out of Lent changed.

During Lent, we hope to transform ourselves with God’s help, like caterpillars do when they go into a chrysalis. They stay inside for some time to make their transformation into a butterfly.



BIBLE BYTES

The “desert” Jesus stayed in for 40 days was probably different from what we think of as a desert. There were plants and trees and water. Wild animals would have been living there. Imagine how scary that would have been at night!



Well Versed

“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Matthew 4:4

Family Focus

Today, the children learned about Great Lent, distinctive spiritual practices of the season and how to use these practices to transform their lives and become closer to God. They made a butterfly and cocoon craft as a beautiful symbol of change. We also reviewed the lessons of the Sundays of Lent.

Living Your Faith

1. Review the Sundays of Lent with your child at home.
2. Place his or her craft in a prominent place as a reminder of how we are changed with God.
3. Put aside 5 minutes each day to say a prayer with your family. It can be as simple as asking for a blessing or thanking God for your days together as a family.