



Desert Fathers – 40 Days with Jesus in the Wilderness



This Lenten Program for men is undertaken by those men who want to use this special season to become more like Christ in the way they live their daily lives, and more firmly unite with Christ, through detachment from things that can get in the way. For this, Lent is a perfect time to allow the Holy Spirit to bring about real transformation and renewal in our lives.

The Desert Fathers Program (though you don't have to be a father to join us) will target 4 key areas of our lives to bring about growth and change:

1. **Spiritual** (Prayer, Sacraments, penitential practices, etc)
2. **Human** (Exercise, healthy dietary habits, healthy lifestyle habits)
3. **Intellectual** (seek to understand areas of our faith more deeply)
4. **Service of God and Others** (intentionally caring for the people and situations God brings into our lives)

Desert Fathers aims to introduce a certain level of discipline/ good habits across these 4 areas.

1. Spiritual – A Healthy Soul

Daily Lectio Divina with Gospel of the Day (a list will be provided along with a 'How to' explanation).
Daily Rosary – preferably with others (Family etc)
Make the Way of the Cross each Friday of Lent
Sacrament of Confession by Mid Lent and just before the end of Lent as a minimum
Eucharistic Adoration – 30mins each week of Lent - can be combined with Lectio Divina of that day. (This can be done in Church before the Tabernacle if Public Adoration is not available locally). As a minimum 4 x 30mins during the 7 weeks of Lent
Daily Mass during Lent - but, if every day is not possible, then a minimum of 2 weekday Masses.
The Heroic Minute – No Snooze Button upon waking – up, out of bed and on to your knees, giving the first minute of the day to prayer. Please explain this to your wife beforehand.

2. Human – A Healthy Body

Only ESSENTIAL phone/internet use after 5pm
Digital Fast each Sunday of Lent
At least 3 – 4 check-ins each week with your anchor (assigned by the group and it is meant to be a way to encourage each other – it is a check-in not a check-up!)
Show up to the weekly group meeting – some groups may be able to meet in person, some digitally this will be decided by the group, as well as the time, day etc. See sample meeting agenda below.
Leave social media for Lent – this will free up an enormous amount of time for many of us.
No TV – unless, as a Dad, you have to monitor your children's viewing. You may watch one sporting match/game or movie per week – so choose wisely. Highlights on Match of the Day or similar program is out!
No Alcohol – with rare exceptions – and even then, only one!
Physical Exercise at least twice a week – meeting for a hike with your group could be one of those sessions. A romantic walk-in nature with your wife/girlfriend does not count!
Fridays of Lent (and Ash Wednesday) are days of Fast and Abstinence for you. No Meat those days and only 1 meal with 2 smaller meals/snacks. Plan ahead – don't book functions or parties for Fridays.
Cold Showers – Monday to Friday
Black Tea and Black Coffee – no sugar! <i>You may have a soft drink on a Sunday or Solemnity</i>
Sweets and Chocolate are out for the duration of Lent
A Desert Father is allowed to be a Dessert Father only on Sundays during Lent and Solemnities.

3. Intellectual – A Healthy Mind

Read Dan Burke's book: "Into the Deep" (available on kindle) – share any insights or questions at your weekly meeting. A study video will be sent weekly to your group co-ordinator.

This book is quite short but will help launch the men of your group into a basic understanding of what a deeper prayer life can look like and how it can be sustained. The group can agree the chapter to be read each week.

Each Week a short section of the Catechism will be suggested reading for the men of your group. This will be sent each week to the group co-ordinator.

Any of the following Books should be read: Choose one. The goal is not that you have any or all of them read by the end of Lent – the goal is to allow them to feed your mind and so feed your faith. A group may choose the same book for everyone or each member might read a different one and if they get to the end of it – swap it with another man for his book.

Pope Benedict XVI – Jesus of Nazareth – Vol II, Holy Week
Brant Pitre – Introduction to the Spiritual Life
Scott Hahn – Covenant and Communion
Scott Hahn – The Fourth Cup
Fulton Sheen – Three to Get Married
Trent Horn – Answering Atheism
Ralph Martin – Will Many be Saved?
Christopher Kaczor – The Seven Big Myths about the Catholic Church
Diane Moczar – Seven Lies about Catholic History
Jacques Philippe - Interior Freedom

These books will mean incurring an expense – but a considerable amount of money will be saved because of the other disciplines you are imposing on yourself these 40 days. Often the Kindle version is cheaper. Your local Library may have the book or may be able to order it in for you.

4. Service – A Healthy Dose of Charity Towards Others

Below are some ways in which you should step out in service of those around you in the weeks of Lent. Try to complete one a week:

Visit someone Sick, Elderly, Alone or in Prison

Ring 3 friends/acquaintances/colleagues you haven't spoken to in a while.

If married or dating – have a special date night with your wife. Enjoy the evening.

If you're single – then meet up with a friend or friends and have an enjoyable meal or lunch together.

A walk-in nature with your wife/fiancée/girlfriend

If you're single – then meet with a friend or friends and go for a hike.

If they are still alive – take your parent(s) out for a meal. Don't wait for a special occasion – do it as a way to thank them.

If they are deceased – visit their grave (if nearby) and by way of thanksgiving, pray a Rosary for them.

Offer the Rosary once a week for your local priest(s).

If you have children – give each child at least 30 minutes special one-to-one time over the 7 weeks of Lent. E.g. Go for a coffee or soft drink just with them. Its best if some small act of faith happens before this time/treat e.g. visit a church, go to mass etc.

We are all called to be spiritual fathers, so if you don't have children this time can be with Godchild, niece or nephew.

Perhaps you could consider giving a little donation to a children's charity.

Summary:

Daily Disciplines

- Heroic Minute
- Lectio Divina with Daily Gospel (Minimum 20 Mins but aim for 30)
- Rosary
- Only Essential Phone/Internet use after 5pm.
- No social media
- No TV – except necessary monitoring of children’s viewing material
- No Alcohol
- No snacking between your 3 daily meals
- Black Tea/Coffee – no sugar!
- No Sweets and Chocolate (*that includes no biscuits, buns or cakes*).
- Read a little of the reading material every day.
- Cold Showers – Monday to Friday

Weekly Disciplines

- Attend your group meeting.
- Read agreed chapter from Into the Deep and watch associated study video
- Friday is a Fast Day
- Friday is Way of the Cross day
- Think about the opportunity for a good Confession
- At least 2 Weekday Masses per week during Lent.
- At least 30mins of Eucharistic Adoration per week
- Sunday is Digital Fast Day – except for the game or movie
- Several check-ins with one of your group
- Physical exercise at least 2 times a week.
- Watch a game/movie once a week.
- Have a Dessert on Sunday’s and Solemnities. (*There are at least 3 Solemnities during Lent*)
- One NON-ALCOHOLIC beverage on Sundays and Solemnities.
- **St. Patrick’s Day – a Day off from your Lenten Disciplines.** Alcoholic drinks limited to 3 drinks.
- Offer 1 Rosary per week for your local priest(s).
- Fulfil one of the suggested Service activities that week – by the end of Lent you should have completed them all.

Suggested weekly meeting agenda: Open with prayer eg a Hail Mary, each man then gives a 90sec update on his week: a) shortcomings and blessings against the 4 headings (Spiritual, Human, Intellectual & Service). When everyone has shared the group can share on insights from “Into the Deep”

Group -set up & information meeting: In order to explain more about the program and set up on-line groups there will be a **zoom meeting** on Sunday Feb 19th at 8:30pm. Meeting ID: 494 625 9738 Password: 997298. An outcome from this meeting will be: groups set up, group co-ordinator agreed, mobile numbers shared with your group co-ordinator, anchors paired & weekly meeting time agreed so the group is ready to start “**Desert Fathers**” on Ash Wednesday – Feb 22nd.