

LENT, 2026

ENCOUNTER CHRIST IN THE SILENCE

Lent is an opportunity to step away from the busy-ness and distraction of daily life and the usual routine by focusing on prayer, fasting (sacrifice), and almsgiving (giving). It's an invitation to encounter Christ and grow closer to God, who always wants us back, no matter where we've been, what we've been doing, or how long we've been gone. Join me on this Lenten journey and spend some time with God.

Remember the basics: Prayer, fasting and almsgiving. If you're looking to increase your prayer life, join us for daily Mass or for Eucharistic Adoration. Try reading the scriptures. Start with Luke's Gospel we're reading in this liturgical year. Spend a few minutes every day in quiet prayer. It doesn't need to be long but intentional and regular. Receive God's love and mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Been away for awhile? No sweat; the priest can walk you through it.

If you're looking to fast more this Lent, don't just give up chocolate. The intention of fasting is not merely to deprive yourself but to create a hunger in yourself reminding you of what should be your hunger for God. Take Pope Francis's challenge below. Try giving up television or social media. Again this is not merely to detox (although it can help) but to create space for God. Spend the new found time in prayer with God or with your family or friends.

Scripture reminds us that one of the best ways to enter fully into Lent is to give more: *Charity covers a multitude of sins* (1 Peter 4:8). This is a call to share your blessings with others but, even more, a call for you to trust in the Giver of those blessings. Increase your generosity by participating in the Rice Bowl or Easter SPAN Meals or making a casserole for Our Daily Bread. Increase your giving to the Poor Box, the Annual Appeal for Catholic Ministries, or to our community in the offertory. All of these are simple, but none come easily when we are focused on something other than God.

That's why we're focusing on silence this year. Silence is not simply the absence of noise or distraction, not simply refraining FROM noise or distraction but a vulnerableness within us, an opportunity FOR Christ to speak. To do that, we need to understand silence better. The first stage of silence is what we call ascetical silence. It's intentionally closing out noise and distraction precisely to be vigilant, to help us open hearts and minds, lives and homes, to go deeper, to enter the quiet, to be receptive, to look beyond the immediate, whatever hassles we encounter, whatever struggles we face. It is the space in the quiet of our hearts that God can enter and bless us, that we can recognize how God is present and at work in our lives, how God is speaking. It's why Jesus goes into the desert, to be with His heavenly Father. And because He is fully human as we are, when Jesus enters the silence, when He's intentional about being with God, He gets tempted.

Throughout Lent we're offering a new message series, **Encountering Christ in the Silence**, to quiet hearts and minds help us listen, to keep our focus fixed on Christ. We'll be drawing heavily from the book, **The Hidden Power of**

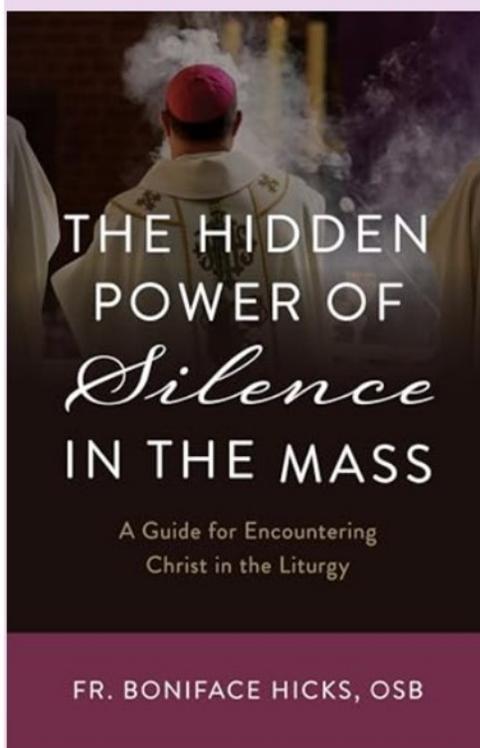
Silence in the Mass. It is an excellent resource about silence and how we can achieve it, not just in the Mass but in the other areas of life as well.

Lent is about our facing the same temptations Jesus did. To assist in becoming comfortable with the silence, each week, we'll have home work to do: a daily practice we recommend for at least each of the 7 days of the week (and beyond that as well) and a weekly challenge that will require some extra effort. Lent is not emerging thinner, holier, and more generous. Lent is not about what God wants FROM us but all that God wants FOR us. It's the perfect time to reboot or start in earnest. Take the chance. Be silent and allow God to speak.

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressure and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

Pope Francis



HAPPY LENT!!