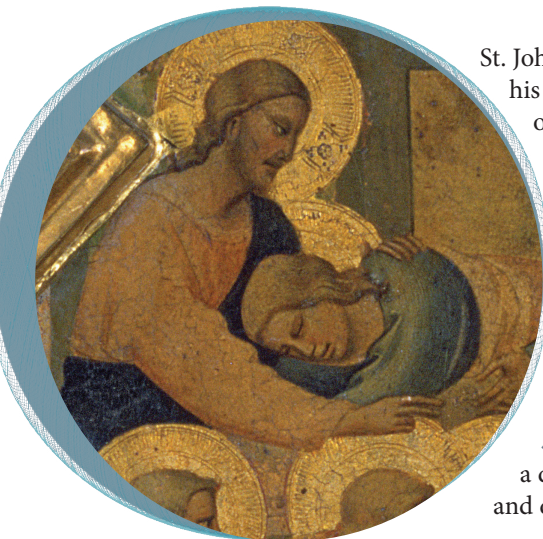




## A reflection on the 3 forms of Penance

LENT 2022



St. John, the beloved apostle, was an eye witness to Christ's public life, from the moment he first left his father on the shore to the moment Jesus was taken up to heaven. John provides a testimony of what it means to be an eye witness to Jesus Christ.

*"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life—for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete" (1 JOHN 1:1–4).*

**Jesus Christ is alive!** He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" Hebrews 13:8). To be a disciple of Christ means to know Him personally and bear witness to Him. Just as the apostles and disciples spent time with Jesus, you too are called to do likewise.

The season of Lent is the time to renew your desire to be a disciple of Christ. The three forms of penance—fasting, praying, almsgiving—are a means for you to hear, look upon, and touch Him. Therefore, I invite you to take a few moments to prayerfully examine your personal relationship with Him. For guidance let us return to John's letter:

### 1 FASTING

*"We have heard..."* **HAVE YOU HEARD HIM?**

To hear and experience the presence of God requires silence and a willingness to listen. Fasting is a means to strike an interior balance and to refrain from overindulging in any activity. It assists in decreasing the noise and busyness which prevent you from hearing Him.

*"We have seen with our eyes..."* **HAVE YOU LOOKED UPON HIM?**

Prayer is a relationship, a conversation, a personal encounter with God—in sum, talking to God from one's heart. A story told by St. John Vianney describes how you can look upon Christ. He noticed an older gentleman regularly sitting in church and asked him what he did for those long periods of time. The man answered, "I look at him and he looks at me."

### 2 PRAYER

### 3 ALMSGIVING

*"We have touched with our hands..."* **HAVE YOU TOUCHED HIM?**

"Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). In Jesus' teaching about the judgment on all nations (Matthew 25:31–46), He says that when you reach out and give of yourself to others, you touch Him. This gift of self enables you to find yourself and cleanse your heart of selfishness and greed (Luke 11:41).

**Jesus Christ is alive!** He is looking at you with love because He first loved you (John 4:19). He is inviting you to be an eye witness. Don't be afraid to spend the next forty days reading and meditating on the Word of God, for "indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

Ask yourself the following question: Have I heard Him, seen Him, touched Him? In doing so you can respond to His call "those who wish to be my disciples must take up their cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24)