



18. March 2026  
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT  
Day 29: “A Testimony to the People of the Old Covenant”

The twenty-ninth day of our Lenten journey invites us to reflect on the people of the Old Covenant, from whom our Lord descended according to the flesh, as well as the apostles. To this day, they have not recognized the Messiah. Consequently, some Jews continue to await His coming, while others see the messianic promise fulfilled in the State of Israel, or run the risk of following false messiahs—if religion still matters to them at all.

As the people of the New Covenant, we should always keep in our hearts and in our prayers the intention that, after so long, the Jews may finally recognize the Messiah, who is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In today’s reading, we hear the prophecy that God will gather His people from among all nations, bring them back to their land, purify them of all their impurities, and give them a new heart (Ezek 36:23–28).

The context of these words is that, since the Israelites did not live in their land according to God’s will, He scattered them among the nations.

*“When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their doings (...) So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood which they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries; in accordance with their conduct and their deeds I judged them.”* (Ezek 36:17–19)

However, their sojourn in a foreign land had not caused the other nations to recognize the glory of the Lord through the testimony of the Israelites. Therefore, He declares: *“I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”* (v. 23)

In reality, God had chosen Israel to bear witness to Him as His chosen people. But to be capable of this, the Israelites had to be purified of their impurities and idolatry and receive a new heart.

*“I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses,*

*and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (vv. 25–28)*

Thus, the Jews who had strayed from the path needed a new heart and a new spirit, willing to follow God’s precepts with joy. In short, they needed a true inner transformation. The same is true for us Christians, who have recognized the Messiah and follow Him.

As God’s people, as the people of the New Covenant, we are called to bear witness before all nations so that they may recognize that, as St. Justin Martyr declared, *“we Christians are the true Israel that springs from Christ.”*

In us must be fulfilled what has not yet been fulfilled in the people of the Old Covenant, according to God’s plan, with the exception of the holy remnant that recognized Jesus as the Lord. Now, our example must attract the Jews who still lack knowledge of the Messiah and, therefore, of His grace.

But how can this be achieved? First of all, the authentic proclamation of the Gospel must never be omitted. In this regard, unfortunately, the Church has taken a wrong turn today. Instead of asking the Holy Spirit to show us the most appropriate ways to proclaim the Gospel convincingly to the people of the Old Covenant, many sectors of the Church and its hierarchy have given up on preaching Christ to them. A mistaken and disastrous notion is spreading, according to which Jews have their own path to salvation apart from Jesus Christ. However, this flagrantly contradicts Sacred Scripture and the mission of the Church.

On the other hand, it is essential that the authentic proclamation of the Gospel, in addition to conveying the correct doctrinal content, be supported by our witness of life. If the message we convey is grounded in the path of holiness, the Gospel will more easily touch people’s hearts, as we saw in the meditation of March 16 regarding the story of St. Abraham of Edessa. At first, the pagans were completely resistant to attempts at evangelization, and all the missionaries who had tried to convert them had failed to win their hearts for the Lord. However, the behavior of St. Abraham, which they found incomprehensible and astonishing, ultimately opened the doors for them to assimilate the words of truth and be converted.

Let us reflect on St. Paul's great concern for the Jews, the people of the Old Covenant, and how he burned with the desire that his brethren, "*kinsmen by race*" might come to know the Lord (Rom 9:1–5). This should also be a burning concern for all of us, impelling us to implore the Lord to heal their blindness, just as Jesus restored sight to the man born blind in today's Gospel (Jn 9:1–38). Indeed, as St. Paul testifies, "*What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day.'*" (Rom 11:7–8).

Therefore, the enlightenment of Israel is urgently needed, which would be a great grace for all humanity, as St. Paul emphasizes: "*For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?*" (Rom 11:15).

May our fervent following of Christ serve as a witness to the people of the Old Covenant and to all other nations, so that they may recognize Him who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6)!

The flower we wish to gather from today's meditation is an authentic witness of the people of the New Covenant to those of the Old Covenant.

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**Meditation on the reading of the day:** <https://en.elijamission.net/the-time-of-grace/>

**Meditation on the Gospel of the day:** <https://en.elijamission.net/jesus-glorifies-the-father/>