

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



Lead Us from Temptation

Creator God,
you formed us in your image
and breathed your life into us,
filling us with your spirit;
Yet we turn our backs to you
and respond to the temptations of wisdom
beyond our grasp
and the possibilities of power and gain.
Be merciful to us, O Lord,
for we have sinned with open eyes and
selfish hearts.
Be merciful, O Lord,
for we know not what we do.
May your mercy fall on us, O Lord,
as we seek to do your will,
for you live and reign united as Father,
Son, and Spirit,
for ever and ever. Amen.

March 5, 2017

Forty Days and Forty Nights



Today's Readings: Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 12–13, 17; Romans 5:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11. As we sing the Lenten hymn “Forty Days and Forty Nights,” we are drawn into Christ’s time in the desert, his temptations, and his perseverance. Christ’s trial in the desert is captured in two short phrases of the second verse: “Shall not we your sorrow share” and “Fasting with unceasing prayer.”

Today’s Gospel brings to mind more than Christ’s time in the desert and the devil’s three temptations. We are challenged, on this First Sunday of Lent, to prepare for our forty days and nights of fasting and prayer. Or perhaps we should consider this time fasting *with* prayer.

We share with Christ our desert times, when worldly distractions and demands are set aside for us to focus on who we are as people of faith. Today’s Gospel is a reminder

that our temptations are best addressed when we refocus ourselves in a context of prayer and time apart from our usual distractions and demands. By retreating from all that busies us, we are better able to couch distractions in prayer and respond to demands with deepened faith. Throughout our forty days and forty nights, we share with Christ not only his sorrow, but his righteousness, as St. Paul reminds us in the Second Reading.

We have a share in the life of Christ, and at the beginning of the Lenten season, we know that our prayer is sustained and strengthened by our sharing in Christ’s Death and Resurrection. We are strengthened by our Baptism to combat the temptations we encounter, supported by the unceasing prayer that we share with Christ.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 6

Be Holy, for I Am Holy

Each Lent we are reminded that we who are baptized are called to be Christ-like. As we journey through the forty days, we reflect on what it means to be Christian. The readings during the season spell that out for us. Through our Lenten disciplines, our goal is holiness: to love one another as Christ did, in all he accomplished. Reflect this week on what it means to be holy. *Today's Readings: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Matthew 25:31–46.*

Tuesday, March 7

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity

The witness of the earliest Christian martyrs is epitomized by these two women martyrs. Perpetua, and her servant Felicity, both imprisoned while pregnant, remained constant in their faith through childbirth, separation from their families, and watching as others were taken to the arena of martyrdom. May their witness, in life and death, remind us that we are never separated from the love of Christ (Romans 8:38–39). *Today's Readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

Wednesday, March 8

St. John of God

St. John of God had a natural impulse to aid people who were in need. Whether buying clothes on the spot to help clothe a poor family or rushing into a burning hospital to carry out patients, John was the first to assist others. His works of mercy were profound, and an example to us of Christ's words: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." *Today's Readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

Thursday, March 9

Ask and It Will Be Given You

Queen Esther prayed from morning until evening for the Lord to help her, and her prayers were answered. In the Gospel reading, Jesus reminds us to continually ask, seek, knock, and our persistence will be rewarded as well. As we search and ask, and knock and plead, may our mourning be turned into gladness, and our sorrow into wholeness. *Today's Readings: Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; Matthew 7:7–12.*

Friday, March 10

Be Reconciled First

Today's Gospel places a priority on reconciliation. Against whom do you hold a grudge? To whom is your automatic response one of anger? Even before we turn to others to judge, to condemn, to lash out, Jesus calls us to leave our gifts at the altar and be reconciled to one another. Today is a good day to reach out to someone, without prejudice or malice, and pay it forward. *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

Saturday, March 11

Change Our Hearts

It is not enough to follow the Commandments. Discipleship is not only about doing the right thing. We are called to holiness, which entails more than correct actions. Lent challenges us to change our ways, to change our focus and redirect it so that we change our hearts. Select a Lenten hymn today and pray the text, taking to heart what it says to you. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*

