

First Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 22, 2026

Introduction to the day

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Lord God, you led your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide now the people of your Church, that, following our Savior, we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

FIRST LESSON: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

A reading from Genesis.

Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

PSALM: Psalm 32

You forgave me the guilt of my sin. (Ps. 32:6)

SECOND LESSON: Romans 5:12-19

A reading from Romans.

Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT - Forty Days of Humility

The devil gives Jesus three opportunities to assert himself as powerful and exceptional: to turn rocks into bread, to be saved by the angels, and to rule over all the earth. Three times Jesus rebuffs the devil, turning his attention to God and refusing to take the bait.

Anthony the Great, a desert father whose life mirrored the experience of Jesus in this text, once said, "I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, 'What can get through from such snares?' Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility'" (Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Cistercian, 1975). This is exactly how Jesus responds to the temptations

offered by the devil: turning his attention back to God in humility, refusing the temptation to prove himself through miracles and acts of power.

During Lent, we are invited to engage in practices like fasting, almsgiving, and prayer to discipline our minds and bodies so we can return our full attention to the abiding love of God in Jesus. There will be a temptation to engage these practices as ways of puffing ourselves up, performing, or proving our worth. But Jesus calls us back to a Lent rooted in humility, engaging practices not for the sake of proving ourselves, but for deepening our trust in God.

Where might we be experiencing that temptation to puff ourselves up, perform, or prove our greatness? What practices might support a posture of humility, reminding us that God is the author of all good things, and that we are loved and sustained by a God who humbly took on flesh for the sake of the world?

May these forty days teach us to embrace humility and to trust that God walks with us, making all things new.

THE PRAYERS OF INTERCESSIONS

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

God of all grace, grant faith to your church. Give to all the baptized the will to resist temptation and to worship and serve you alone. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all creation, tend this earth. When human greed and disobedience threaten this planet and the life it contains, lead us by your Spirit into ways of reverence, awe, and gentleness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all nations, preserve us from trouble. Surround all living in places of violence with your steadfast love and give resilience to all who work for peace. Grant courage to those who challenge, especially around issues of racism and systemic oppression. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all healing, mend our wounds. Bring wholeness to all who are sick, give peace to all who groan in grief, and send companions to all who are lonely or isolated. Especially we pray for Chris Burchat, Natasha Gagnon-Burchat, Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Barbara Kant, Glenda Panke, Marilyn Schneider, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all people, provide for our community. For any among us who hunger for bread, bring nourishment. For any among us who hunger for truth, speak your life-giving word. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all life, bring us to you. We thank you for your free and abounding grace, and for those who, by that same grace, now rest eternally in you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.
Amen

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

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