

Celebrate

First Sunday in Lent

February 26, 2023

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

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

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

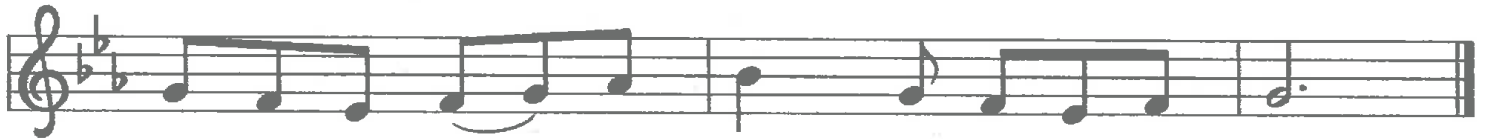
Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

^{3:1}Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the

middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.



Mer-cy em - brac - es those who trust in the LORD.

Happy are they whose transgressions¹ are forgiven,
and whose sin is¹ put away!

²Happy are they to whom the LORD im-¹putes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there¹ is no guile!

³While I held my tongue, my bones with-¹ered away,
because of my groaning¹ all day long.

⁴For your hand was heavy upon me¹ day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the¹ heat of summer. **R**

⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not con-¹ceal my guilt.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD."
Then you forgave me the guilt¹ of my sin.

⁶Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you
in¹ time of trouble;

when the great waters overflow, they¹ shall not reach them.

⁷You are my hiding-place; you preserve¹ me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts¹ of deliverance.

⁸"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that¹ you should go;
I will guide you¹ with my eye. **R**

⁹Do not be like horse or mule, which have no¹ understanding;
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,
or else they will¹ not stay near you."

¹⁰Great are the tribulations¹ of the wicked;
but mercy embraces those who trust¹ in the LORD.

¹¹Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice¹ in the LORD;
shout for joy, all who are¹ true of heart. **R**

Second Reading

Romans 5:12-19

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.

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—¹³sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment

following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

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.

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes
from the mouth of God.'

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command his angels
concerning you,'

and 'On their hands they will
bear you up,

so that you will not dash your foot
against a stone.'

⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.'

¹¹Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

You alone are God. Sustain your church in times of wilderness. Give vision and wisdom to bishops, their staff, and all entrusted with the ministry of administration (*especially*). Counsel all who faithfully lead your people into the future. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

You create verdant gardens and expansive deserts. Tend to the needs of every living creature. Bless those who work in fields and orchards (*local sources of food and food distributors may be named*), that the world is nourished by the fruits of their labor. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

You know our temptations. Sustain those who govern and legislate. Instill in them a sense of your justice and righteousness, that equity and peace would pervade all the regions and nations of the world. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

You are a hiding place for all in distress. Draw near to exiles, and accompany all refugees and immigrants, especially children who travel alone. In times of trouble, trauma, or illness, surround your people with your steadfast love (*especially*). Merciful God, receive our prayer.

You offer abundance to all. Bless the ministries of hospitality in this place. Care for those who tend to the needs of others, especially worship greeters, coffee hour hosts, and nursery attendants (*other ministries of care and hospitality may be named*). Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You alone are God. We praise you for the faithful departed in every age. Unite our prayers with theirs, until our wilderness journey is complete, and we rest in you. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 32. **Tuesday** Hebrews 4:14—5:10. **Wednesday** (commemoration of George Herbert, hymnwriter, died 1633) Matthew 18:10-14. **Thursday** (commemoration of John Wesley, died 1791; Charles Wesley, died 1788; renewers of the church) Psalm 121. **Friday** Micah 7:18-20. **Saturday** Isaiah 51:4-8. **Second Sunday in Lent** Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17.

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