



Celebrate

First Sunday in Lent

February 22, 2026

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

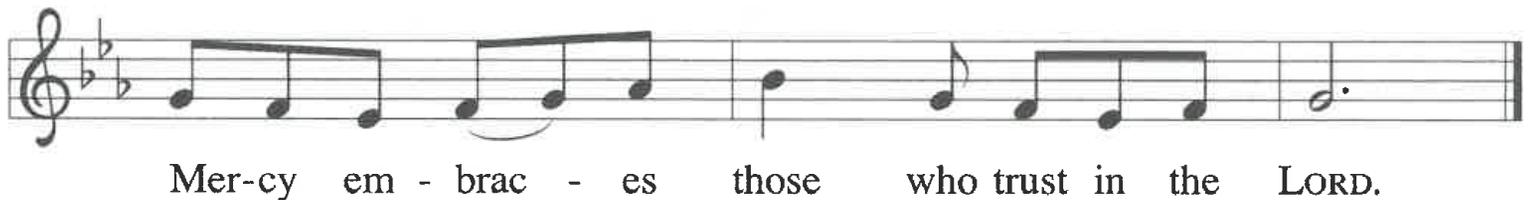
Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

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.



- Happy are they whose transgressions ¹ are forgiven,
and whose sin is ¹ put away!
- ² **Happy are they to whom the LORD im-¹putes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there ¹ is no guile!**
- ³ While I held my tongue, my bones with-¹ered away,
because of my groaning ¹ all day long.
- ⁴ **For your hand was heavy upon me ¹ day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the ¹ heat of summer. R**
- ⁵ Then 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 guilt ¹ of my sin.
- ⁶ **Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you
in ¹ time of trouble;
when the great waters overflow, they ¹ shall not reach them.**
- ⁷ You are my hiding-place; you preserve ¹ me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts ¹ of deliverance.
- ⁸ **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that ¹ you should go;
I will guide you ¹ with my eye. R**
- ⁹ Do not be like horse or mule, which have no ¹ understanding;
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,
or else they will ¹ not stay near you."
- ¹⁰ **Great are the tribulations ¹ of the wicked;
but mercy embraces those who trust ¹ in the LORD.**
- ¹¹ Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice ¹ in the LORD;
shout for joy, all who are ¹ true of heart. R

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—¹³for sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam, who is a pattern 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 gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's

sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign 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 through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so through 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 tested by the devil. ²He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward 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 glory, ⁹and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus 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.

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

A brief silence.

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 . . .*)

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.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

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 (*especially*).

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

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

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156) Psalm 32. **Tuesday** Hebrews 4:14—5:10. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, died 1921) Matthew 18:10-14. **Thursday** Psalm 121. **Friday** Micah 7:18-20. **Saturday** Isaiah 51:4-8. **Second Sunday in Lent** (commemoration of George Herbert, hymnwriter, died 1633) Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17.

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