

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



By Grace

Holy Lord,
your Son modeled perfect trust in you
and did for us what we could not
do for ourselves.
Through him you recreate the work of
your hands.
With your Spirit as our teacher and
guide,
help us answer your call to mercy,
justice, trust, and love.
We will always struggle to follow the
example of your Son,
to entrust our lives to you in faith
and obedience.
Forgive us when we fail to resist the lure
of sin.
Make us quick to forgive others.
Humble us when we think we no longer
need your grace.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 1, 2020

Our Own Deserts



Today's Readings: Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 12–13, 17; Romans 5:12–19 or 5:12, 17–19; Matthew 4:1–11. Each reading today keeps us mindful of our need for God. After breathing life into human beings, God placed them in a rich, fertile garden where all their needs were met. Enticed by the possibility that they might exceed their limitations, the man and woman seize the chance to decide for themselves what will make them safe and happy.

St. Paul discusses how sin spread from the first human beings to each new generation. Everyone experiences evil in some form, and because all of us sin, we participate in and extend the reach of evil. Sin is thus inescapable, as inescapable as its ultimate repercussion, death. Into the midst of our

hopeless situation comes God's grace, "the gracious gift" of Jesus Christ.

Jesus models perfect trust and obedience. There in the desert he humbly depends upon God's word rather than his arguments as he withstands the devil's attempts to make him meet his needs, test God's love, and claim lordship over the world without first laying down his life for it.

These temptations are particular to Jesus. We face our trials and temptations. The readings remind us that we cannot overcome them by ourselves. Lent is thus a time when we not only try to resist sin, we discover how much we need God to help us.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 2

Be Holy

God wants his people to be holy, the Lord tells Moses in the reading from Leviticus. They are to be a just and compassionate community, a people worthy of his name. God's expectations as we hear them in the Gospel are not substantially different. Those whom God brings into his kingdom have set themselves apart by loving other people in concrete ways. Choose a Corporal Work of Mercy to perform this week. *Today's Readings: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Matthew 25:31–46.*

Tuesday, March 3

Powerful Words

When God speaks, things change. When our prayer is guided by the spirit of Christ, our words become part of God's life-changing action in the world. Because we do not always know how to pray, Jesus tells us to put God's Kingdom first, to ask God to meet our basic needs, and to make us more like God, who is the very source of forgiveness and who triumphs over evil. Practice the life-changing mercy of God by praying for someone you are struggling to forgive. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

Wednesday, March 4

Resistance

Jonah preached to foreigners, yet the entire people accepted his prophetic warning and repented. Jesus, by contrast, is among his own people, and they are rejecting him and all he embodies. Sometimes we simply do not want to repent. God calls us to change in some way, but we resist. We ask for more time, we want proof that we have to change, or we tell ourselves that God isn't challenging us after all. What part of ourselves most needs to change? Today turn that part of yourself over to God. *Today's Readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

Thursday, March 5

Ask, Seek, Knock

Esther prays for the protection of her people, who had just been sentenced to a collective death. Her grief-filled prayer is fervent and trusting, and God answers it. Esther models the prayer Jesus urges us to offer. We are to pray with hope, compassion, and persistence. God is eager to share his goodness with us. If it seems that God is not answering your prayers, ask him why. *Today's Readings: Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; Matthew 7:7–12.*

Friday, March 6

Worship and Justice

Ezekiel addresses complaints that God is punishing people for the sins of their ancestors. The prophet responds that the people themselves have sinned. These sins, enumerated right before this passage, include acts of injustice. The people have not only failed to worship God, they have also failed to care for their neighbor. Worship and justice are inseparable, as we learn again in the Gospel passage. What gift of justice or reconciliation can you offer to God this Sunday? *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

Saturday, March 7

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity

Perpetua and Felicity were killed in the early third century because they had become Christians. Despite the violence that awaited them, both women and their companions remained steadfast in their new faith. By their martyrdom, they became “sacred to the Lord.” Their courageous witness in the face of persecution inspired others to accept Christianity. Watch for the chance to be a courageous witness by responding with loving kindness toward someone who seems undeserving. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*

