

# FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Lent invites us into a slower, more intentional season, one that gently exposes how we respond to discomfort, uncertainty, and fear. For family members and friends of those struggling with addiction or dysfunction, this season can stir familiar emotions. We may feel anxious about outcomes, tempted to control situations, or weary from carrying concerns that were never ours to manage. Recovery reminds us that Lent is not about fixing others. It is about allowing God to restore balance and peace within us.

This Sunday's gospel reading leads us into the desert with Jesus, a place where vulnerability is unavoidable and trust becomes essential. Jesus is not sent into isolation as punishment but led by the Spirit into a space where his dependence on the Father is clarified.

This Sunday's gospel reading describes this moment at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:1-2):

*At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.*

Jesus enters the desert fully aware of his hunger and weakness. He does not deny them or rush to escape them. For family members and friends, this image can be especially meaningful. Loving someone affected by addiction often leaves us feeling depleted and unsure where to turn for relief. When fear rises, we may be tempted to intervene, manage, or rescue in order to quiet our anxiety. The desert reveals how quickly we reach for control when discomfort feels unbearable.

Each temptation Jesus faces invites him to act independently of the Father. He is tempted to meet legitimate needs through shortcuts, to secure certainty, and to grasp control over outcomes. These invitations mirror the patterns many of us fall into when we feel overwhelmed. We may tell ourselves that if we just say the right thing, do enough, or stay vigilant, everything will be okay. Yet recovery teaches us that peace does not come from control. It grows through surrender.

The first reading reminds us that God sets before us a choice between life and death, blessing and curse. For those in recovery, this choice often appears in subtle ways. Will we choose serenity over anxiety? Trust over vigilance? Acceptance over resentment? These choices do not change other people, but they profoundly change us.

Lent offers spiritual practices that support this interior shift. Prayer creates space to bring fear and uncertainty before God rather than carrying them alone. Fasting can reveal where we rely on control or reassurance rather than trust. Almsgiving draws our attention outward, reminding us that we are part of a larger story than our immediate concerns. These practices are not about self-denial for its own sake. They are about reordering our hearts.

Ash Wednesday begins this season with humility. The ashes remind us that we are finite and dependent on God. When we hear, "Repent and believe in the Gospel," we are invited to release what we cannot control and return to what truly sustains us.

As family members and friends, Lent becomes an opportunity to recommit to our own recovery. By allowing

God to meet us in the desert of uncertainty, we begin to experience a peace that does not depend on outcomes, but on trust in a faithful and loving God.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

■ Where do you notice fear or uncertainty shaping your responses to someone you love?

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■ How does Jesus' time in the desert challenge your relationship with control and surrender?

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■ Which Lenten practice might help you cultivate greater serenity and trust during this season?

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## MASS READINGS

**FIRST READING** Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

**RESP. PS.** Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

**SECOND READING** Romans 5:12-19

**GOSPEL** Matthew 4:1-11

