

First Sunday of Lent



The readings for this Sunday's Mass—the First Sunday of Lent—remind us of the grace that floods our lives when we surrender our old ways and seek to be led by Jesus. Over the course of 40 days, Jesus takes us into the desert to proclaim or renew our obedience to Him. Three pillars of Lent that draw us closer to Christ are fasting, almsgiving, and prayer.

We might suffer a little bit during this process, but we can be affirmed that the voluntary suffering of the cross is far more redemptive than our powerless attempts to manage addiction and unhealthy attachments within our family. We journey together so that in our weakness we may find unity and in unity, victory. Aligning ourselves with the suffering of our Lord and the needs of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ rededicates our commitment to recovery and a spiritual way of life.

Addiction takes hold in the lives of our loved ones as they believe the lie that something other than our Lord can bring fulfillment. What may begin as a pleasurable experience results in a mental obsession and physical cravings which cannot be relinquish by any human power, regardless of how well constructed our plans are. By God's grace, we have encountered a solution and a fellowship with others who have found freedom from the cycle of family addiction and spiritual darkness.

We can seek Jesus as our guide who knows the real human forces of temptation, as described in beginning of this Sunday's Gospel Reading:

*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.*

Many 12-step principles are woven into the story of Christ's temptation in the desert, and we can learn much about surrender in the most challenging moments of our family's recovery. For Jesus, the gesture of turning His will and life over to the care of God is not a one-time act. Rather, it is full of daily and momentary choices. Love and commitment is affirmed through these choices.

When we were actively joining our loved ones on the roller-coaster ride of addiction and unhealthy attachments, we had no choice and did not know freedom. In recovery, we learn to keep our feet planted on the ground no matter what.

Through our baptism, we are given an identity as beloved daughters and sons of God. As we step further into our recovery, we are given opportunities to decide what that means to us as faithful Catholics. The devil—also known as the father of lies—would have us believe that we can inherit the glory of the world and may only find it through the empty attempts to influence and control the behavior of others.

The coming weeks prepare the way for new Christians to enter the Church through baptism. Those who have already received baptism are called to renew their vows and accompany the faithful celebrating the sacraments of initiation. This movement begins on Ash Wednesday, as the ashes we receive are a reminder of the humility required for a personal encounter with Jesus.

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” are words that may be spoken as ashes are put on our forehead. In other cases, we may hear the words of Jesus: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

The season of Lent is an opportune time to get back to basics and reestablish spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and sharing our resources. Basically, this is a chance to trust God, clean house, and help others. It doesn't have to be over-the-top. As Saint Mother Theresa once said, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

Reflection Questions

- How has God transformed your life in ways that you have not been able to yourself?
- What plans do you have connect with others to seek renewal and spiritual progress during Lent?
- What tools and healthy practices keep you from getting on the roller-coaster ride of addiction? Who helps you keep your feet planted on the ground when you feel tempted to react?

40 Meetings in 40 Days Challenge

- ▽ The 40 Meetings in 40 Days Challenge is an invitation to grow closer to Jesus Christ and renew your commitment to recovery this Lent.
- ▽ Commit to attending a recovery meeting every day for 40 days and engage daily spiritual routines.
- ▽ Challenge begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22.
- ▽ Find more info and register at **catholicinrecovery.com/40daychallenge**

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11