

First Sunday of Lent



The liturgy this Sunday—the First Sunday of Lent—reminds 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 in Lent, Jesus takes us into the desert to reclaim or renew our willingness to know, love, and serve the Lord. 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 the self-centered suffering of our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. 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.

Saint Peter offers a word of strength and courage to new Christians while reminding us of the effect of our baptism in this Sunday's Second Reading:

*Christ suffered for sins once,
the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,
that he might lead you to God.
Put to death in the flesh,
he was brought to life in the Spirit.
In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison,
who had once been disobedient
while God patiently waited in the days of Noah
during the building of the ark,
in which a few persons, eight in all,
were saved through water.
This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.
It is not a removal of dirt from the body
but an appeal to God for a clear conscience,
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
who has gone into heaven
and is at the right hand of God,
with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.*

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.

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.

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," are words that may be spoken as we receive ashes this week. In other cases, we may hear the words that Christ speaks in this week's Gospel: "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 have you found unity and connection among others in recovery?
- How has God protected and transformed you through the highs and lows of life?
- How are you planning to seek a renewal of faith and commitment during the season of Lent?

40 Meetings in 40 Days Challenge

Establish or renew a foundation for recovery and develop healthy spiritual practices this Lent!

- 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 Wednesday, Feb 14 - join any time!
- For more information and to register visit catholicinrecovery.com/40daychallenge

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Genesis 9:8-15

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15