

First Sunday of Lent



Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, inviting us to a 40-day spiritual retreat into the wilderness. This aligns with Jesus Christ's journey immediately following His baptism in the Jordan River, where His identity as God's beloved son is proclaimed. During this season of renewal and cleansing, we seek to be strengthened in virtue by shedding the things that keep us from knowing, loving, and serving God.

This Sunday's Gospel reading sheds light on Jesus' temptation by Satan in the desert after fasting for 40 days. Bishop Fulton Sheen (Life of Christ) reflects on this passage and the nature of temptation by noting, "The defenses of the soul are seen at their strongest when the evil which has been resisted is also strong. The presence of temptation does not necessarily imply moral imperfection on the part of the one who is tempted." This is true for all of us recovering from addictions, compulsions, or unhealthy attachments.

Addiction takes hold in our lives as we believe the lie that something other than our Lord can bring us to fulfillment. What may begin as a pleasurable experience results in mental obsessions and physical cravings that we cannot relinquish on our own. By God's grace, we have encountered a solution and a fellowship of others who have found freedom from this cycle of addiction and spiritual darkness. We can seek Jesus as our guide who knows the real human forces of temptation. Luke's Gospel notes:

*Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan
and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days,
to be tempted by the devil.*

As seen in this Sunday's Gospel reading, our temptations can be categorized in three ways: Those of the flesh (lust and gluttony), those of the mind (pride and envy), and loving and pursuing other idols (greed). In recovery, we must be careful to avoid the allure of power, honor, and the pursuit of other false idols:

*Then he took him up and showed him
all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.
The devil said to him,
"I shall give to you all this power and glory;
for it has been handed over to me,
and I may give it to whomever I wish.
All this will be yours, if you worship me."
Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written:
You shall worship the Lord, your God,
and him alone shall you serve."*

FYZWjcb Ei Yghcbg

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 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 are affirmed through these choices. When we were active in our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we had no choices and we were not free.

Through our baptism, we are given an identity as beloved sons and daughters of God. As we step further into our recovery, we have opportunities to learn 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 addictive and compulsive behaviors we once knew.

Remember that we deal with the forces of evil – cunning, baffling, powerful, and patient. We need God's help each day. We commit ourselves to the Creator and to our recovery throughout the forty days of Lent despite whatever temptations may come. Remember, you are not alone. May we find resolve and strength in the Lord during this season of purification!

- How has God transformed you, protected you, and guided you amid temptation?
- What challenges or temptations in your recovery journey do you need to surrender to God and seek support for today?
- How do you plan to seek renewal and spiritual progress during this season of Lent?

A Season of Freedom: How Lent Can Strengthen Your Recovery Journey

Webinar on Tuesday, March 11 at 7:30p ET/4:30p PT

- Learn from CIR members (clergy and lay) who have found freedom and transformation through Lent
- Gain spiritual insights, practical tools, encouragement, and hope to make the most of the Lenten experience
- Free for CIR+ members otherwise \$10 to register
- This and all webinar recordings available on CIR+
- For more info and to register for the webinar visit catholicinrecovery.com/event/webinar250311

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13