

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



Deliver Us

O saving God,
who led your Chosen People
to a land flowing with milk and honey,
nourish your Church during its Lenten fast
and rescue it from the snares of death.
Lead us out of the desert of temptation
and deliver us from evil when we call upon
your Holy Name.
May we too, find shelter in you, Almighty
One of Israel,
so that, saved from distress, we might share
in the promise of Easter.
Grant us courage when we are faced
with fear
and faith when confronted by doubt.
May our hearts forever radiate
the joy of Jesus the Christ
and remain steadfast in the face
of temptation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 14, 2016

Temptations

Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 26:4–10; Psalm 91:1–2, 10–11, 12–13, 14–15; Romans 10:8–13; Luke 4:1–13. What comes to mind when you think about the desert? It is often depicted as a wasteland and a land filled with danger. After the Exodus, our ancestors wandered for forty years in the desert, often losing faith and turning away from God. Temptations lure us because they seem glamorous or easy. Often, giving in to unhealthy temptations isolates us from God's love and we are consumed with our selfish desires.

The Gospel tells us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Reflecting on Jesus' responses to the devil, we learn that, in the face of temptation, he remains obedient to God. Jesus is forced to discern

God's will and grow closer to the Father through prayer and fasting. The image of the desert often indicates a place for prayer, listening, and quiet presence. In this season, we must take time to enter the desert, trusting that the Holy Spirit will help reveal our brokenness and lead us to listen attentively to God and respond openly to God's invitation. It might be helpful to spend a moment each day writing in a journal about those things, ideas, or persons that tempt you to turn away from God and your call to be a faithful witness. It is not always easy to name temptations, but like the Israelites, we too will be led to the Promised Land and share in God's bounty. Jesus is the path to truth and freedom. What is he asking of you?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 15, 2016

Conduct

Verses 2 and 18 in the First Reading provide two rules for the divine-human relationship. First, we must be holy like God; and second, we must love our neighbor. Maybe we've heard it too often, but if we follow these commands, our lives will be rooted in God. In the Gospel, Jesus is clear that those who pour out their love will share in the Kingdom. Perhaps you might try to take a few moments to journal about ways you have broken the commandments. How might you reconcile with God, self, and neighbor? *Today's Readings: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Matthew 25:31–46.*

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Word

The illustration in the First Reading invites us to think about God's Word. Like the rain that nourishes the earth, God's Word nourishes our hearts and awakens us so that we can spread the Good News. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came into the world to reveal the Kingdom. When you hear the Word, are you inspired to do God's will? Consider taking time to provide encouragement to a friend. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Repent

Are we an evil generation? Jesus uses these strong words in the Gospel to address those who seek more proof of his spiritual authority. They want a sign like Jonah was for Nineveh. He called the city to repent so that God would spare them. The role of a prophet is to call people back into right relationship. Through the Incarnation, God reveals himself in Jesus, the ultimate sign of his love for us. We must repent and turn back to God to enter the fullness of life. This evening light a candle and slowly pray today's psalm. *Today's Readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

Thursday, February 18, 2016

Pleading

Queen Esther's prayer in the First Reading acknowledges the sin of the nation and recalls God's faithfulness. She pleads with God to rescue them from the enemy. The Gospel reminds us that Jesus saves us from our enemies, our sins. We must seek God's mercy and then, like the psalmist, give thanks and praise when the Lord answers our prayers and delivers us from our brokenness. As we approach the second week of Lent, this might be a good time to consider joining or starting a Bible study. *Today's Readings: Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; Matthew 7:7–12.*

Friday, February 19, 2016

Turn Away

The Prophet Ezekiel is straightforward in telling the people to turn away from sin. By casting aside their wickedness and following the Law, they will have life. We must strive to live a virtuous life united to Christ. When Christ is not at the center of our lives, it is easy to be overwhelmed by sin, which leads to destructive relationships. If we choose a path without Christ, we are liable to judgment. Where do you need reconciliation? Plan to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance during this season. *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

Saturday, February 20, 2016

Love

God created us out of love, for love; Jesus calls us to witness this love in the Gospel. He tells us to love our neighbors and our enemies. Who is your neighbor? What does it look like to love these neighbors? Second, consider who your enemies are. What does it look like to love them? God has filled us with love to share, so think of ways you can share your love. *Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*

