

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (A)
FEBRUARY 22, 2026

“Lenten Faithfulness”

My Brothers and Sisters, we once again embark upon the uniquely Christian season of Lent. Lent is a forty-day period of time which acts as a preparation for Easter Sunday. The preparation involves increased prayer, fasting, other forms of penance and a desire to come closer to God through repentance of our sins. The word lent comes from the Old English term “*lencten*” which means “springtime.” The familiar liturgical color for Lent is violet, which symbolizes repentance. Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday (CCC 571).

The readings offered for the first Sunday of Lent are very iconic. The first reading from second and third Genesis is the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, how sin entered into the world (Gen 2:7-3:7). It is sometimes said that the entire book of sacred scripture is a footnote to the first three chapters of Genesis. Without an understanding of these first three chapters it becomes next to impossible to understand the story of the Bible and the meaning of life in general. God created Adam the first man and gave him specific commands that he must follow. He was to trust God his creator. But through the temptations of the devil Adam removed his trust from God, disobeyed God his creator and in so doing gave his allegiance to the devil. Thus the first sin, or original sin was one of disobedience (CCC 389). When one disobeys God one falls into the sin of idolatry, and idolatry will plague humanity for the rest of its existence on earth (CCC 2113-2114).

The Apostle Paul describes this situation in his letter to the Romans, the second reading (Rom 5:12-19). “Through one man (Adam) sin entered the world and with sin death.” “Just as through one man’s disobedience all become sinners, so through one man’s obedience (Jesus) all shall become just.” Man is redeemed from eternal death by the obedience, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (CCC 422, 705).

We hear in the Gospel that as a preparation for his salvific mission Jesus will go into the desert to fast and pray for forty days (Mt 4:1-11). While there he will be tempted by the devil as Adam was tempted, to go against the will of his Father in heaven. But unlike Adam, Jesus will remain obedient. His obedience will undo the disobedience of Adam.

Adam was tempted to eat the forbidden fruit. Jesus will be tempted to break His fast by eating bread. In this way Jesus overcomes the temptations to gluttony and materialism.

As Adam was tempted to abandon his trust in God, so will Jesus be tempted. But Jesus responds by saying, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” Indicating that we place our trust in God alone and we do not presume upon his

acting according to our bidding, thus we do not take God's care for granted through presumption (CCC 2092).

Adam fell to the temptation to consider himself divine, "to be like God." Jesus overcame the temptation to power and wealth and said, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him alone."

Materialism, distrust, presumption, self-idolization, power, and wealth, all of these were overcome by Jesus in the desert.

Our Lord's forty days in the desert were a time of preparation. Moses fasted on Mt. Sinai for forty days before receiving the law from God. Elijah spent forty days in the desert to prepare for his mission. The Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years preparing to enter the promised land. And now we see how Jesus spent forty days in the desert preparing for His mission. Our Lenten period of forty days is a reflection of Our Lord's time in the desert. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us use these forty days well and to take our time of prayer and fasting seriously. Attend Mass more frequently. Pray your rosary every day. Curtail forms of entertainment and turn them into time for spiritual reading. Avoid unnecessary food and alcohol consumption. Drink one less cup of coffee. Eat one less pastry. Discipline your body and your mind for doing God's will. Take Jesus with you during these forty days. Don't neglect to call upon the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, your guardian angel, and the Saints for help. The devil will tempt you just like he did Jesus, to ignore your Lenten preparation. Defeat him in the sacrament of reconciliation. Jesus gave us His sacraments to be used. Therefore, do not neglect them.

NOTE: CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church