

First Sunday of Lent: “Choosing Obedience: From the Fall of Adam to the Victory of Christ”: Gn 2:7–9; 3:1–7; Rom 5:12–19; Mt 4:1–11

Joke: Just have a beer: A man took his young son to a baseball game. While they were sitting there, he asked the boy what he was going to give up for Lent. The boy replied, *“I don’t know, Dad. What are you going to give up?”*

His father said, *“I’ve thought about this a lot and decided to give up liquor.”* Later in the game, the beer man came by, and the man ordered a beer. His son objected, *“Hey, I thought you were giving up liquor!”* His dad answered, *“Hard liquor, son. I’m giving up hard liquor. This is just a beer.”* To which the boy replied, *“Well then, I’m giving up hard candy.”*

Today, on this First Sunday of Lent, the Church invites us to enter the desert with Jesus. Lent is a sacred season of intense spiritual preparation — a time to confront our temptations, repent of our sins, and renew our lives so that we may celebrate Easter with our Risen Lord, who conquered sin and death through His suffering, death, and Resurrection.

The first reading presents the tragedy of the “Original Temptation.” Adam and Eve were created in love and placed in a beautiful garden. They had everything they needed. Yet the serpent whispered a dangerous suggestion: “You will be like gods.” The temptation was not simply about eating a fruit; it was about rejecting dependence on God. It was the temptation to choose self over obedience, independence over trust.

God gave them freedom — the freedom to love Him or to turn away. Sadly, they chose disobedience. And as **St. Paul explains in his Letter to the Romans**, through that one act of disobedience, sin and death entered the world. A broken relationship with God became humanity’s painful inheritance. But the story does not end there.

In today’s Gospel, we see another scene — not a garden, but a desert. Not abundance, but hunger. After fasting for forty days, Jesus is tempted by the devil.

The first temptation: “Turn these stones into bread.” It is the temptation of physical satisfaction — to place material needs above spiritual trust. But Jesus responds, “Man does not live by bread alone.” He refuses to mistrust His Father.

The second temptation: “Throw yourself down from the Temple.” It is the temptation of pride — to test God, to demand proof of His protection. But Jesus answers, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” He chooses humble trust.

The third temptation: “All the kingdoms of the world I will give you, if you worship me.” It is the temptation of power, wealth, and glory without sacrifice. Jesus firmly rejects it: “The Lord your God shall you worship.” He chooses obedience over ambition.

Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeds. Where Adam disobeyed, Christ obeys. St. Paul calls Jesus the New Adam. Through one man's disobedience came sin; through one Man's obedience comes righteousness and life.

My dear brothers and sisters, we too live between the garden and the desert. Every day we are tempted — by the devil, by the world around us, and by our own selfish desires. We are tempted to seek sinful pleasures, easy wealth, recognition, power, or comfort — sometimes even using unjust means to obtain them.

Lent reminds us that we cannot conquer these temptations by ourselves. We must cooperate with God's grace. How do we do that?

First, through prayer. Jesus entered the desert to pray. If He needed prayer to strengthen His human nature, how much more do we? Let us find time each day to speak with God and to listen to Him, especially through meditative reading of Scripture and participation in the Holy Mass.

Second, through penance. Fasting and small sacrifices train our hearts. They teach us self-control and detach us from unhealthy desires.

Third, through reconciliation. Sin breaks relationships — with God and with others. This Lent, let us approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation with humility and also seek forgiveness from those we have hurt.

Finally, through charity. Sharing our blessings with the poor, serving others humbly, and practicing almsgiving restore love where selfishness once ruled.

Lent is not merely a season of giving up something. It is a season of choosing again — choosing obedience over pride, trust over doubt, God over self.

Adam chose self and brought death. Jesus chose the Father and brought life. During these forty days, may we walk with Christ in the desert, so that we may also share in His victory at Easter. Amen