

SUNDAY GOSPEL REFLECTION

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Wednesday we began the season of Lent which is our preparation for the Easter celebration of Jesus' resurrection. It is a time in imitation of Jesus' forty days in the desert. Jesus fasted in the desert and overcame the devil's temptations. Jesus never sinned but in the desert he was tempted, and during these forty days of Lent we remember Jesus in the desert as we try to overcome temptation in our lives and to overcome sinfulness. Lent is a time to put our souls before a mirror and see ourselves as we really are. Lent is an invitation to allow our sin and darkness and wounds come to the surface so that we can deal with them and allow them to be healed by the grace of Jesus.

Since the early centuries, the Church has suggested that we undertake three things during Lent: **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**. It is for this reason that the Gospel text for Ash Wednesday every year is Jesus' advice on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (Matt 6:1-6, 16-18).

- Lent is a time for more **prayer**. We live busy lives and there is much emphasis on enjoying life, but a life without prayer is a life without the joy of the presence of God. If we do not pray, we are not Christians at full potential; we are only walking when we could be flying. We pray because when we pray, we touch God. God is our loving Father who greatly desires that we allow him close to us. So, we pray more this Lent to experience more of the joy of knowing God our Father.

- **Fasting** is a penance the Church encourages us to undertake during Lent. From the spiritual point of view, fasting symbolizes our dependence on God. It expresses that we really are trying to put God first in our life. The Bible tells us that fasting from food must go together with fasting from violence and fasting from oppressing people (Isa 58:3-12). In other words, when we fast from food, it is to be accompanied by a loving and forgiving attitude towards others. So, to fast in a way that is genuinely pleasing to God, can we make an effort to forgive those who have hurt us and not harbor resentment any longer? While we may not forget, we certainly do not want to live being dominated by past wounds. We want to live in the present free of the past.

- For **almsgiving** or helping the poor, the Church makes it easy for us by giving us the opportunity to contribute to Catholic aid agencies. Helping the poor during Lent brings the words of Jesus to mind: "Whatever you did to one of the least of these you did to me." (Matt 25:45)

The word "Lent" is an old English word which means "springtime." May this Lent really be a new springtime in the lives of each of us. Through prayer, through fasting from food accompanied by forgiving others, and through donating from our surplus to help the poor, may we like Jesus in the desert for forty days overcome temptation and thus be well prepared to celebrate Easter.



Have a Blessed Lent 2026

Fr. Rafal Ligenza

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