

First Sunday of Lent (A) – 22.02.2026

Gen 2:7–9; 3:1–7; Rom 5:12–19; Mark 4:1–11

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once ran to his father with a handful of wildflowers. “Daddy,” he said, “I love you so much, and I want to do only what pleases you from now on.” Imagine if the father replied harshly: “You’ll regret this for the rest of your life. I’ll take away your toys. You’ll eat only what you dislike. Nothing joyful for you anymore.” No loving father would respond this way. Instead, he would embrace the child, celebrate his love, and guide him with care.

And yet, so often, we treat our heavenly Father as if He were that stern, unyielding parent. We fear that if we give ourselves completely to Him, He will take away all that brings joy. Today, as we begin Lent, the readings invite us to discover that God is not a tyrant, but a loving Father who desires our trust and our hearts.

We stand at the beginning of Lent, a time of turning back to God and of penance. The Church offers us these days as a chance to realign our lives and our faith, to reflect on our

relationship with God and with others, to examine our way of living, and perhaps to change it, so that we may live and believe more consciously and more fully.

Those who take this path will not be spared temptations. The question of the meaning of our life and of our faith arises again and again. At the same time, we encounter many things that try to distract us from seeking that meaning.

Let us ask the Lord for His mercy, that in these forty days of the Lenten season, we may turn back to Him and refocus our lives on the Kingdom of God.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ, Many people are eager for wealth, yet you said: “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” – *Lord, have mercy.*

Many people value themselves too highly and worship their own ego, yet you said: “Do not put the Lord to the test.” – *Christ, have mercy.*

Many people seek power and success at any cost, even

serving evil, yet you said: “Go away, Satan! You shall serve the Lord alone.” – *Lord, have mercy.*

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the good God, who forgives all who sincerely repent, grant us His mercy. Free us from all our sins, strengthen us in all that is good, and lead us to eternal life.

COLLECT

Good God, the forty days of Lent give us the opportunity to rethink our lives. Each year, you grant us these holy forty days, during which our souls may find rest and be renewed, turning back to what truly matters.

Our faith is rooted in Jesus. Be especially close to us during this time. Let these weeks deepen and enrich our lives. Our path takes us through a wondrous desert.

Sometimes we walk this path with courage and strength. Other times we feel lost and uncertain. Yet we may trust that you walk with us.

As seekers, we are on a journey. Let us hear your Word—and live according to it. We ask this through Jesus, who lives with you and loves us, now and forever. Amen.

HOMILY 1: Temptation, Sin, and Trust

Let me begin with a story: A little boy once ran to his father with a handful of wildflowers. “Daddy,” he said, “I love you so much, and I want to do only what pleases you from now on.” Imagine if the father replied harshly: “You’ll regret this for the rest of your life. I’ll take away your toys. You’ll eat only what you dislike. Nothing joyful for you anymore.” No loving father would respond this way. Instead, he would embrace the child, celebrate his love, and guide him with care.

And yet, so often, we treat our heavenly Father as if He were that stern, unyielding parent. We fear that if we give ourselves completely to Him, He will take away all that brings joy. Today, as we begin Lent, the readings invite us to discover that God is not a tyrant, but a loving Father who desires our trust and our hearts.

1. The Nature of Temptation

A man once received a large inheritance and decided to give it all to charity. But as he prepared to hand it over, he hesitated, wondering if he would have enough for himself.

That pause, that tiny moment of mistrust, mirrors what the serpent did in Eden: planting doubt about God's care. Even when God has promised, our hearts are tempted to doubt. In our first reading from Genesis, we encounter the story of the first humans and the tree in the middle of the garden. The serpent tempts the woman, but the deeper danger is not the fruit itself—it is mistrust toward God. The serpent sows suspicion: "God knows that if you eat, you will be like Him. He doesn't want you to be happy."

This hidden mistrust is, I believe, the root of what Scripture calls original sin. It shows itself in many forms: fear of surrendering to God, doubt of His love, or resistance to His commandments. I remember sitting with a group of young people once, preparing to pray a simple offering of themselves to God:

"Lord, here are my hands. Use them as you will. Take away what you wish. Lead me wherever you wish. Let your will be done in all things."

One young person said he couldn't pray those words. The thought of fully surrendering terrified him. That is the

human heart: afraid that trusting God means losing something we cherish.

2. Overexaggeration and Misjudgment

A friend once told me about a coworker who said, "If I follow all the company rules, I won't enjoy life at all!" Yet when he actually tried, he realized the rules protected him from bigger mistakes and unnecessary stress. Often, we exaggerate restrictions in our minds, just as the serpent exaggerated God's command.

The story of Eden also shows how temptation often comes through exaggeration. The serpent distorts God's command: "Did God really say you cannot eat from any tree?" God had forbidden only one tree. How often do we exaggerate, thinking God's commandments limit our happiness rather than protect it?

We might think that Christian life is only "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," but God's Word is full of promises more than restrictions. Even in ordinary life, exaggeration breeds mistrust: "He never appreciates me," or "I always fail."

Recognizing these tendencies helps us discern where the serpent still whispers in our lives.

3. The Steps of Sin

A boy sees a cookie jar on the kitchen counter. First, he looks at it. Then he wants it. Finally, he reaches for it. Simple, innocent, yet the same pattern repeats in bigger temptations: seeing, desiring, taking. Lent invites us to practice self-control, even in small things.

The actual sin of eating the fruit involves three steps: seeing, desiring, and taking. This pattern repeats in human experience: King David saw Bathsheba, desired her, and took her. The first step—seeing—often begins our fall.

As we enter Lent, fasting should not only restrain appetite but also guide the eyes and the mind. We need to choose what we let in, guarding our hearts from images, words, and desires that may lead us astray. Lent is training our vision, our attention, and our hearts to align with God's will.

4. Sin, Death, and the Promise of Redemption

Imagine a servant who betrays his master and is sentenced to death. But the master doesn't just pardon

him; he adopts him as a son, giving him a higher honour than before. This mirrors what Christ does for us: through His obedience and love, He raises us beyond the original state of Adam and Eve.

Paul reminds us in Romans that through one man, sin and death entered the world. Adam's disobedience unleashed a power over humanity—a “superpower” of sin that enslaves us still. But Paul points to hope: through Jesus Christ, obedience and life are restored.

Jesus is not merely returning us to Adam's original state; He elevates our dignity. Like a servant who betrays the king but is then adopted as the king's son, we are given a higher status than the first humans enjoyed in paradise. Through Christ, the chains of sin and death are broken. Even if we stumble, we are no longer imprisoned by our failures.

5. Faith Tested in the Wilderness

A young student once studied all night before an exam, anxious about every possible question. When she finally faced the test, she realized that preparation and trust in her

teacher's guidance were enough. Similarly, Jesus' forty days in the wilderness tested His faith—not by hunger or danger, but by showing that trusting God fully is stronger than relying on our own strength.

Matthew's Gospel shows Jesus in the wilderness, tempted for forty days. "Temptation" here is not just enticement but a test—a proving ground for faith. Jesus faces three temptations that echo Israel's trials: hunger, desire for signs, and worldly power.

1. Hunger: Jesus is tempted to turn stones into bread.

He responds: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

True faith trusts God for daily needs rather than relying solely on ourselves.

2. Testing God: Satan urges Jesus to prove God's presence by a spectacular act. Jesus refuses to misuse divine power for display, teaching us that faith is not about proving God but trusting Him.

3. Worldly power: Satan offers all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus worships him. Jesus answers: "You

shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve." Even in abundance, God must remain first.

These temptations are still with us: the lure of self-sufficiency, the desire for signs, and the pull of wealth or status. Jesus shows us that faith must be tested and rooted in God alone.

- I remember a young man once who complained about God's commandment against premarital intimacy. He felt restricted, thinking God denied his joy. Yet the commandment was meant to protect life and love, not suppress it.
- Consider the family that misuses sacraments for appearances—a child's First Communion becomes a social spectacle, not a spiritual milestone. Temptation often arrives in subtle, socially accepted forms, challenging our integrity.
- And what about fasting? It is not punishment, but a way to train the eyes and desires, like avoiding a

catalogue or a show that stirs greed or lust. Lent is practice for vigilance in daily life.

Returning to our opening story: the little boy who offered his flowers to his father received love and care in return. God, our Father, receives our trust, our fasting, and our repentance with even greater love. He does not diminish us, but raises us to new life through Christ. As we journey through Lent, remember: temptation tests us, but it also teaches us. Sin may enter the world, but so does grace. Let us trust the One who has already passed every test, who intercedes for us as our High Priest, who breaks the chains of sin, and who invites us to the feast of salvation. Lent is our time to lean fully into His love, to practice restraint, to cultivate faith, and to walk with Christ, the victor over sin and death. Amen.

HOMILY 2: Walking with Jesus into the Desert

Let me start with a story. In 2011, an artist in New Orleans, Sandy Chang, painted a wall with chalkboard paint and wrote the words: *“Before I die, I want to...”* Passersby were invited to complete the sentence. People wrote things like: *“Learn the trumpet,” “Plant a tree,” “See the Taj Mahal,” “Have seven children.”* One person even wrote: *“Make peace with my neighbour.”* The wall became a space for reflection, reminding people that life is full of beginnings, choices, and dreams. And yet, every beginning comes with challenge—it asks us to step forward into the unknown.

This is what Lent invites us to do: to pause, to reflect, and to step into the desert of our own hearts, walking with Jesus as he did.

After his baptism, Jesus had a powerful experience: the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and God said: *“This is my beloved Son.”* He must have wondered: Who am I really? What is my mission? What does it mean to be God’s Son? But instead of starting his public ministry

immediately, Jesus took time to withdraw into the desert for forty days. The Spirit led him there to a place of emptiness and silence, where hunger, thirst, and solitude forced him to confront the essential questions of life.

Imagine a hiker lost in the mountains. The path disappears, the wind howls, and they are alone. At first, fear and hunger dominate, but slowly, they notice the beauty around them, find a spring of water, and discover reserves of strength they never knew they had. The desert works in a similar way: it strips away distractions and reveals what truly matters.

Temptation and Choice

In the desert, Jesus faced three temptations:

1. **Bread for Hunger:** *“Turn these stones into bread.”* He could have satisfied his own hunger and even helped others. But Jesus knew life is more than bread; there is a deeper hunger—for God, for meaning, for love.

Think of someone who works nonstop to buy a bigger house or nicer things. They feel satisfied for a moment, but

the deeper longing for connection, purpose, or peace remains. Bread alone cannot fill the heart.

2. **Proving Himself:** *“Throw yourself from the temple and God will save you.”* This was a temptation to seek attention, admiration, or reassurance. Jesus refused. He trusted God rather than demand signs.

A young student once asked a teacher, “If I do this perfectly, will you give me a prize?” The teacher smiled and said, “No. Trust yourself to do it because it’s right, not for the reward.” Like the student, Jesus acted out of faith, not for show.

3. **Power and Control:** The devil promised kingship and authority. Jesus knew that the desire to control everything leads only to ruin. His answer: *“Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”* God alone is enough; only love and service bring lasting life.

These temptations are not just Jesus’ story—they are ours. Comfort, recognition, and power lure us every day. Life can

bring deserts: illness, loss, crises, or personal struggles.

The desert asks: Whom will we trust? How will we live?

During the pandemic, many felt lost, isolated, and powerless. Some found comfort in material things or distractions, but others discovered new ways to pray, serve, and connect with family. These were deserts that revealed what really mattered.

Taking Time Out

Jesus' desert time reminds us of the importance of pause.

Today, people take wellness weekends, retreats, or adventure trips to recharge. Jesus' reason was deeper: he went into the desert to confront evil and prepare for his mission. Lent can be our spiritual time-out—a chance to reflect on our lives, our choices, and our calling as God's beloved children.

A teacher told her students: "Sometimes, stepping back helps you see the path ahead clearly." One student paused from social media for a week and realized what truly made them happy—friendship, study, and prayer—rather than

endless scrolling. Like that student, Lent invites us to step back and see life in a new light.

Beginnings and Renewal

Lent is also a season of beginnings. Just like the wall in New Orleans invited people to complete "*Before I die, I want to...*", Lent asks: "*What matters most? How do I want to live?*" Every beginning carries magic, but also challenge. Jesus' forty days in the desert remind us that new starts are often tested, but they can lead to fullness of life.

Anecdote: A young couple moved to a new city for work, leaving friends and family behind. At first, everything felt lonely and difficult. But gradually, they built community, found meaning in their work, and discovered hidden talents. New beginnings require patience, trust, and courage—just like Lent.

Conclusion

Let me close with a story from everyday life. A small boy planted a tiny seed in a pot. Every day, he watered it and watched. Weeks went by, and nothing seemed to happen.

Then, one morning, a small green sprout appeared. The boy was overjoyed. He had tended the seed with care and patience. Lent is like that seed. Our prayers, our fasting, our acts of love may seem small at first. But with God's care, they grow into life, love, and hope that blesses us and the world. Let us take time this Lent to enter the desert with Jesus, face our temptations, reflect on our choices, and trust that God's love will help us grow. And let us ask ourselves, like the wall in New Orleans invited: *"Before I die, what do I want to live for?"* Let us live as God's beloved, serving, trusting, and loving every day. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Let us bring our gifts to the altar, offering them in gratitude and seeking God's help to resist temptation and grow in faith. Let us pray that they may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Good God, in the Eucharistic bread, you draw near to us and give yourself entirely. Transform us through these gifts of bread and wine, so that we may resist the temptations that seek to separate us from you. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

Truly, it is right and just to give you thanks, good God, again and again. You, God of goodness and mercy, never cease to call us to the fullness of life.

Even when we are trapped in sin and guilt, you offer us forgiveness. You invite us to entrust ourselves completely to your grace. Though we have broken your covenant many times, you have never abandoned us.

Through Jesus, your Son, you have drawn humanity so close to you that we can never be separated from you. You give your people a time of reconciliation and remove the heavy stone from our hearts, so that we may breathe freely in Christ. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can live according to your Word.

For this, we give you our thanks and wonder. In union with the angels and saints, we praise the power of your love and joyfully proclaim: *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...*

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

(Text unchanged, except inserted paragraphs for personal meditation only)

Before Epiclesis:

Lord, as we call upon the Holy Spirit to sanctify these gifts, let Your Spirit also sanctify our hearts during this Lenten journey. May we be strengthened to resist temptation, to trust in Your providence, and to walk faithfully with Christ in the desert of our daily lives.

After Anamnesis:

As we remember Christ's saving passion, death, and resurrection, may we also recognize the new life offered to us. Through His victory over sin and death, may we rise each day from our own failures and temptations, renewed in hope and empowered to live as God's beloved children.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

As we trust in God's care, let us pray with confidence, knowing He listens to us and gives us what we need.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us your peace in our hearts and in our world.

Strengthen us in faith, that we may trust in your providence as Jesus did in the desert.

Free us from the snares of temptation, guide us away from sin, and help us to live according to your will.

Keep us safe in your love, so that, with hearts undivided, we may celebrate this Eucharist with joy, awaiting the coming of your kingdom.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Prince of Peace, and you have shown us that true peace comes from trusting in your love.

As we walk with you through the deserts of our lives—

through trials, temptations, and struggles—grant that we may carry your peace to one another.

Heal the wounds of our hearts, soften the hardness of our spirits, and strengthen us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Let your peace dwell in our families, in our communities, and throughout the world, so that your kingdom of love and reconciliation may grow among us.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Like the small boy who planted a seed, our Lenten prayers, fasting, and acts of love may seem small at first. Yet with God's care, they grow into life, love, and hope that blesses us and the world.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Good God, our life is like the journey of water. It begins as a small drop and flows onward. Sometimes it is calm, sometimes wild and foaming, yet it always continues—under your blessing.

Be near us with your blessing, so that we may feel the source and draw from it the water of life. We ask and thank you, today and all the days of our lives. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May God bless us, so that we do not fall for the temptations of fleeting promises.

May He give us the insight to recognize that we can only truly be human when we acknowledge Him as our God, not using Him for our own purposes.

May God grant us what is good for us, strengthen us to do His will, and lead us where He wants us to be.

So may the loving God bless and guide us, + the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

This Lent, remember: God is not a harsh taskmaster but a loving Father. Temptation teaches us, sin challenges us, and grace transforms us. Trust Him, walk with Him in the desert, and allow your small acts of love and sacrifice to grow into abundant life.

Monday of the 1st Week of Lent

Lev 19:1–2, 11–18; Mt 25:31–46

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, a man was hurrying through a city street when he noticed an elderly woman struggling to carry her groceries. He hesitated—he was late and tired—but finally stopped and helped her home. As he left, she smiled and said quietly, “You’ve been very kind.” Later that evening, he realised that something deeper had happened: in stopping for her, he himself had been changed.

In today’s readings, God reminds us that holiness is not distant or abstract. It is lived in honesty, compassion, and love of neighbour. Jesus tells us plainly that whatever we do for the least, we do for him. This Eucharist invites us to open our eyes and hearts, so that love may become visible in our daily lives.

As we begin this celebration, Lent asks us to slow down and to look again—at our choices, our priorities, and the people we so easily pass by. In the ordinary moments of

life, God is already present, waiting to be recognised and served.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you identify yourself with the poor and the forgotten. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you call us to love not in words but in deeds.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you will judge the world with justice and compassion. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of mercy and compassion cleanse our hearts, forgive us our sins, and lead us on the path of conversion to life everlasting. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God, our salvation, you call us to be holy as you are holy and to recognise your Son in the least of our brothers and sisters. Turn our hearts back to you, enlighten our minds, and strengthen our wills, so that this Lenten season may truly renew us in faith, hope, and active love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A few years ago, a young man walking home late saw a small group of people huddled in a park, shivering and sharing a loaf of bread. Unsure at first, he gave them the sandwiches he had, stayed to talk a little, and then walked home. That simple act of care left him with an unexpected peace, though he did not realize it at the time—he had met Christ in those in need.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that the measure of our lives comes down to one question: how have we treated our needy neighbour—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned? We are not judged by how much we prayed, or how often we went to church. What matters is active love.

Jesus goes even further: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me." To feed, clothe, welcome, or care for someone in need is to serve Christ himself. To ignore them is to turn away from him. Often, like the people in the Gospel, we do not even realize who we are encountering.

This is why the Gospel can be so challenging. Christ is not only present in the sacred spaces of prayer and worship but hidden in ordinary encounters, especially where there is weakness, need, or suffering. Many people serve the Lord every day without knowing it, simply by responding with kindness, patience, and generosity to those who depend on others to live with dignity.

The cross reminds us of this truth. There, Jesus himself was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Every time we meet someone in their brokenness, we are standing at that same foot of the cross. Faith is not only belief—it is love in action, visible, practical, and merciful.

The young man in the park thought he was only giving sandwiches. In reality, he had served Christ. Every act of compassion, however small, touches heaven. Today, Lent calls us to see Christ in the vulnerable and to respond with love that acts—because in doing so, heaven breaks into our world.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, my brothers and sisters,
that our offering of bread and wine,
and the offering of our lives,
may be pleasing to God,
our loving and merciful Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,
as we present these gifts at your altar,
teach us to offer not only bread and wine
but also our lives, made holy by justice, mercy, and love of
neighbour. May this sacrifice shape us
into a people attentive to the hungry, the stranger, and the
forgotten. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

In this season of Lent
you call us back to what truly matters,
teaching us that holiness is found
not only in prayer and sacrifice,
but in love made visible through mercy and compassion.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ,
you show us your face
in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, and the poor,
and you invite us to recognise him
in the least of our brothers and sisters.

As we walk this path of conversion,
you nourish us with your word
and strengthen us at this table of life,
so that renewed in love,
we may serve you more faithfully in one another.

And so, with angels and saints,
and with all who strive to love as you love,
we sing the hymn of your glory:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

*(Text unchanged, except inserted paragraphs for personal
meditation only)*

Inserted paragraph before the Epiclesis

*As we gather around this altar,
we remember that we come not alone,
but carrying with us the cries of the hungry,
the loneliness of the forgotten,
and the silent hopes of those who wait for compassion.*

*May this Eucharist open our eyes
to recognise your Son
in every human face we encounter.*

(Epiclesis – original text continues unchanged)

(Anamnesis – original text continues unchanged)

Inserted paragraph after the Anamnesis

*As we proclaim this mystery of faith,
we renew our commitment to live what we celebrate:
to become bread broken for others
and a cup poured out in service,
so that your love may be made tangible in our world.*

(The Eucharistic Prayer then continues unchanged to its conclusion.)

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

United as one family in Christ, and trusting in the mercy of our Father, let us pray with confidence the prayer Jesus himself has given us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray,
from all that binds and divides us;
grant us peace in our days, that, sustained by your mercy,
we may walk in freedom and hope,
awaiting the fulfilment of your promise
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are our peace and our reconciliation.
Look not upon our weakness and sin,
but upon the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her unity and peace,
so that, renewed in love,
we may be a sign of your mercy to the world.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

This is Jesus, the Bread of Life,
who gives himself for the life of the world.
Happy are those who are invited
to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

We have received the Bread of Life,
the presence of Christ among us.
He now sends us out
to recognise him beyond this altar—
in the hungry, the lonely, and the forgotten.
What we have received in faith,
let us now live in love.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord God,
you have nourished us with the Body and Blood of your
Son.
May this sacrament strengthen us
to recognise him in those who suffer
and to serve him with generous hearts.

Let this Eucharist bear fruit
in lives of mercy, justice, and humble love.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May he turn his face toward you
and teach you to recognise him in the least.
May he strengthen your hands for service
and your hearts for love.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

The Lord does not ask us how great our deeds were,
but how much love we placed in them.
This Lent, one small act of compassion
may be the very place where we meet Christ.

Tuesday of the 1st Week of Lent

Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15

INTRODUCTION

A woman once said that when life became overwhelming, she stopped trying to explain everything to God and simply prayed the Our Father—slowly, one line at a time. “Somehow,” she said, “those words held me when I could no longer hold myself.”

Today’s readings invite us into that same trusting simplicity. Through the prophet Isaiah, God assures us that his Word is never wasted: like rain falling on the earth, it brings life and accomplishes what God intends. In the Gospel, Jesus teaches us how to pray—not with many words, but with confidence in a loving Father who already knows our needs.

We come to this Eucharist as we are, without preconditions and without achievements to display. We bring our fatigue and our gratitude, our wounds and our hopes. God welcomes all of it. As we celebrate this sacred mystery,

may our ears be open to hear his Word, our lips ready to praise and give thanks, and our hearts willing to be shaped by the prayer Jesus himself placed on our lips.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you are God’s Word spoken to us.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the Son of the living God, who teaches us how to pray to the Father. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you speak to us words of life and renew us by your grace. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May God, who is rich in mercy and patient in love, look upon us with compassion, heal what is broken within us, and restore us to friendship with himself, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COLLECT

Lord our God,
look kindly upon your Church.

As we discipline the body through moderation
and turn to you in penance,
grant that our spirit may grow
in true longing for you.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

A young child once watched her grandmother pray every morning. There were no long speeches, no dramatic gestures. She simply sat at the kitchen table, hands folded around a mug of tea, and quietly said the Our Father. One day the child asked, "Why do you say the same prayer every day? Don't you ever tell God what you really need?" The grandmother smiled and replied, "That prayer tells God everything I need to remember."

That simple reply brings us to the heart of today's gospel and the season of Lent. Jesus tells us that prayer is not about informing God of things God does not already know. "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Prayer is not about many words, or about persuading or manipulating God. Rather, prayer forms us. It shapes who we are before God and who we are becoming.

Throughout history there have always been voices calling people to conversion—signposts rooted in God's Word and attentive to human life. Jesus is one of those voices, and in today's gospel he addresses a very human struggle: our difficulty with prayer. Some people feel God has slipped from view; others feel they lack the courage or the words to speak with Him. Jesus knows this, and so he does

something unique. Only once in the gospels does he teach his disciples a prayer, and that prayer is the Lord's Prayer.

This prayer holds a privileged place in the Church because it comes directly from Jesus. Christians of every denomination can pray it together. At Mass we stand to pray it, just as we stand to listen to the gospel, because it

carries the authority of the Lord himself. Its power lies not in its length but in its depth. It is short, simple, and essential—like Lent itself.

This is why Jesus contrasts this prayer with the babbling of the pagans. Many words can become an attempt to control God; few words, prayed with trust, open us to God's transforming presence. The Lord's Prayer expresses deep confidence in the Father's loving providence. God waits for us to pray, not because He needs information, but because He desires relationship. He loves humanity and listens.

Lent invites us back to the essentials. Just as yesterday's gospel highlighted almsgiving, today's gospel highlights prayer. One simple Lenten practice might be to slow down with the Our Father—to take one petition each day and let it rest in our hearts. Prayer then becomes less about saying something and more about becoming someone.

Years later, the same child, now an adult, sat by that grandmother's hospital bed. Words were hard to find. Fear and sadness filled the room. So they prayed the Our

Father together, slowly, line by line. When they finished, the grandmother whispered, "You see? It still tells God everything." And in that moment, the prayer did exactly what Jesus intended—it did not change God, but it changed the one who prayed, filling the silence with trust, hope, and peace.

May this Lent help us rediscover the Lord's Prayer not as words we rush through, but as the very shape of our lives as followers of Jesus—turned toward God, open to one another, and grounded in trust in our loving Father.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that as we place these gifts upon the altar,
we may also place before God
our trust, our longing, and our desire to learn how to pray,
so that this sacrifice and our lives
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord,
receive with kindness these offerings
which we bring before you in faith.
As we learn anew how to pray as your children,
purify our hearts and make our lives pleasing in your sight.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For through your Word
you speak to the depths of the human heart,
calling us back to trust,
to simplicity,
and to a prayer shaped by love.
In this holy season of Lent
you teach us to let go of empty words

and to rest in the confidence
that you know our needs before we ask.
Through Christ our Lord,
you invite us into the dialogue of salvation,
so that, formed by prayer and nourished by grace,
we may become a living sign of your kingdom.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

(Text unchanged, except inserted paragraphs for personal meditation only)

Insertion before the Epiclesis

*Lord, as we call upon your Spirit,
we remember that all true prayer begins with you.
Send your Spirit not only upon these gifts,
but also upon your people gathered here,*

*that we may learn again to trust you as Father
and to surrender our lives to your will.*

(Epiclesis – original text continues unchanged)

(Institution Narrative – unchanged)

(Anamnesis – unchanged)

Insertion after the Anamnesis

*As we proclaim the mystery of faith,
we recall that you have taught us to pray
not with fear, but with confidence,
not for ourselves alone, but for the whole world.*

*Shape us by this Eucharist so that our lives may echo the
prayer your Son placed on our lips.*

(Remaining text of Eucharistic Prayer II unchanged)

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Gathered as God's children and trusting in the love of the Father who knows our needs before we ask, let us pray with confidence in the words Jesus himself taught us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every form of evil,
from fear that closes our hearts
and from temptation that weakens our trust.
Grant us peace in our days,
that, supported by your mercy,
we may walk faithfully as your children
and wait in hope
for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us to call God our Father
and to trust in his loving care.
Do not look upon our failures,
but upon the faith you have planted in your Church.
Grant us the peace that comes from surrender to your will,
and unite us in love,
you who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold Jesus Christ,
the Word made flesh,
who teaches us how to live
and how to pray.
Blessed are those who trust in him
and are called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

“When you pray, do not babble like the pagans ...
This is how you should pray.”

Lord,
often my prayer is filled with words,
yet empty of listening.

Teach me to be still before you.
Help me to bring you what is deepest within me—
my emptiness, my longing, my trust.
Only you can turn emptiness into fullness.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Nourished by this sacrament, O Lord,
we ask that what we celebrate with our lips
may take root in our hearts.
Form us through prayer, strengthen us through your Word,
and lead us to live as true children of the Father.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May he let his face shine upon you and give you peace.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son,  and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

Prayer does not change God; it changes us.
Slow down with the words Jesus taught you—
and let them shape the way you live.

Wednesday of the 1st Week of Lent

Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32

INTRODUCTION

Once, a young boy loved watching fireworks. Every year, he would wait for the loudest, brightest displays in the night sky, mesmerized by the spectacular colours and explosions. One year, a neighbour invited him to climb a hilltop to watch the evening sky. Away from the noise and commotion, he noticed something different: the quiet shimmer of countless stars, steady and constant, each one magnificent in its own right. In that moment, he realized that the spectacular isn't always the most important; sometimes, the ordinary holds a wonder far greater than the showy.

For the past week, we have entered the season of Lent, a time to reflect inwardly, examine our lives, and return to God. Lent invites us to step back from distractions, from the “fireworks” of our busy lives, and see God’s presence quietly at work around us. Today, as we hear the story of Jonah and the call of Jesus to repentance, let us pause,

open our hearts, and call on God’s mercy in the penitential act.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ, through You, people have questioned their images of God and gained a deeper access to Him. Lord, have mercy.

Priest: You have invited people to see God with ever-new eyes. Christ, have mercy.

Priest: You have shown us God as one who desires life for humanity, not their destruction and death. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

Almighty God, source of all mercy, look upon us with compassion. Through Your Son, You call us to repentance and reconciliation. May He free us from the bondage of sin, renew our hearts with His Spirit, and strengthen us to walk faithfully in Your ways. In His name, you are forgiven and restored. Amen.

COLLECT

Merciful and loving God, You call us to conversion and renewal. Grant that as we journey through this Lenten season, we may discipline our hearts, purify our minds, and strengthen our wills to follow You more closely. May our fasting and prayer bear fruit in acts of love and mercy, and may we come to share more fully in the life of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

Once, a young boy loved watching fireworks. Every year, he would wait for the loudest, brightest displays in the night sky, mesmerized by the spectacular colours and explosions. One year, a neighbour invited him to look at the evening sky from a hilltop. There, away from the noise and commotion, he noticed something different: the quiet shimmer of countless stars, steady and constant, each one magnificent in its own right. He realized then that the spectacular isn't always the most important; sometimes, the ordinary holds a wonder far greater than the showy.

In today's gospel, Jesus addresses a crowd hungry for signs, declaring them a "wicked generation" because they seek spectacular proof rather than seeing the truth standing before them. People in every age—then and now—are drawn to what is unusual, unusual visions, extraordinary manifestations of faith. Yet Jesus points to what is already present: Himself. He is greater than Jonah, greater than Solomon, greater than any prophet or king of Israel.

We see this clearly in the story of Jonah. As children, we remember Jonah's flight from God, his time inside the fish, and his eventual mission to Nineveh. The city, a centre of power and sin, was called to repentance, and remarkably, they responded. The people and even their king turned from their ways, and God's punishment was averted. Jonah's story shows that conversion is possible even in the most unlikely places—and that God works quietly, persistently, in ways that may not be spectacular but are deeply transformative.

Faith is not about chasing trends or spectacular signs. It is about noticing the steady, persistent presence of God in our lives. Like the young boy on the hilltop, Lent invites us to pause and recognize the constancy of God's love, present in Word, in sacrament, in one another, and in the quiet moments of life. Conversion is not demanded by a spectacular sign, but by attentiveness to the God who quietly calls us to a deeper life.

So, as we journey through Lent, may we learn to see what is already before us. May we open our eyes to the God who is closer than our next breath, who stands with us and calls us to repentance and renewal—not through fireworks, but through the ordinary, steadfast, and profoundly life-giving signs of His presence.

And finally, just as the boy discovered the constancy of the stars hidden behind the spectacle of fireworks, may we too recognize Jesus, quietly present among us, as the greatest sign of all.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts we offer may become for us the source of life and renewal, pleasing to God and a sign of our faithful hearts.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, we offer You these gifts in humble thanksgiving for Your mercy and the presence of Your Son in our midst. May this sacrifice, strengthened by our Lenten reflections and acts of repentance, draw us closer to You and transform our lives into living signs of Your love and grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. You call us to conversion and renewal of heart, and through the witness of Your prophets and the preaching of Your Son, You invite all people to turn away from sin and walk in Your ways. In Your mercy, You do not abandon us when we stray, but call us patiently, guiding us back to the path of life.

Today, You led Jonah to bring Your message to the city of Nineveh, awakening even the hearts of kings and common people to repentance. Through Your Word and the example of Your faithful servants, You continue to speak to us now, inviting us to examine our lives, turn from what is wrong, and embrace Your grace with hearts renewed. May we, like the people of Nineveh, respond generously to Your call, seeking You above all else, and growing in love, faith, and holiness.

Therefore, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

(Text unchanged, except inserted paragraphs for personal meditation only)

Inserted paragraph before the Epiclesis:

Lord, we remember how You have been present throughout history, guiding Your people and calling them to conversion, from Jonah to today. As we offer this Eucharist, send Your Spirit upon us that we may respond

fully to Your presence with hearts renewed and lives transformed.

Inserted paragraph after the Anamnesis:

Father, as we celebrate the mystery of Your Son's death and resurrection, let us recognize that You continue to work quietly and persistently in our lives. May we, like the people of Nineveh, heed Your call and turn to You in trust and obedience.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

United in faith and hope, let us now pray to our Father in heaven, who guides us in every moment of our lives.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, seen and unseen, and strengthen us with Your grace, that we may walk in Your ways with courage, faith, and hope. Protect us from all that would lead us astray, and keep us always mindful of Your mercy as we await the blessed hope and the glorious coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You said to Your disciples: "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you." Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church. Strengthen our hearts in unity, calm our fears, and grant us the peace that the world cannot give. May this peace guide our words and actions, so that we may live as signs of Your presence and instruments of Your love in the world.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are we who are called to share in this holy banquet. In humility and faith, let us approach Him, ready to be nourished and strengthened in body and spirit.

All: Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Lent means rediscovering faith.

This bread does not satisfy me;
it makes me hungry for You.

Hungry to become bread of life for others.

Lent means renewing faith.

This bread gives me strength to leave old paths
and discover You anew in unexpected places.

Lent means deepening faith.

This bread encourages me to worship.

I may see more deeply in my life
that You are the source, the inner strength,
and the motivating joy of my being and action.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Almighty and ever-living God, we give You thanks for the gift of this holy sacrament, by which You nourish and strengthen our hearts. May the grace we have received lead us to deeper conversion, greater love for our neighbours, and a renewed commitment to follow Your Son

faithfully. Let this Eucharist inspire in us a life of mercy, humility, and steadfast hope, that we may be witnesses to Your presence in the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you;
may He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He protect you from all evil, strengthen you in faith, and guide you in the ways of holiness.

May He fill your heart with His peace, sustain you in hope, and lead you safely to everlasting life. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you +.....**Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

Just as the boy on the hilltop discovered the quiet brilliance of the stars behind the spectacle of fireworks, this Lent invites us to notice the steady, persistent presence of God in our lives—ordinary, constant, and profoundly life-giving.

Thursday of the 1st Week of Lent

Esther 4:17; Matthew 7:7-12

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, a small village was struck by a severe storm. A mother and her young child were trapped in their home as waters rose around them. Desperate, she clutched her child and called out to anyone who could hear, but all seemed lost. Finally, she prayed—not in measured words, but in the raw cry of the heart: *“Lord, help us, for we have no one but you!”* In her need, she found a courage and presence she did not know she had. Rescue came, but she carried with her an understanding: sometimes it is in the depths of despair, in the honest cry of the heart, that we encounter God most fully.

The same truth echoes in our readings today. In the first reading, Esther prays from the depths of her fear and loneliness before facing the king to save her people. And in the Gospel, Jesus invites us to persistent prayer: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.”* Lent is a season that calls

us to such honesty and persistence in prayer. Let us now bring our hearts before God and prepare ourselves to celebrate this Eucharist in a worthy manner:

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you call us to ask, seek, and knock, yet we are often hesitant and slow to turn to you: **Lord, have mercy.** You invite us to trust in your mercy, yet we cling to our own understanding: **Christ, have mercy.**

You call us to live according to your will, yet we often choose our own way: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who calls us to seek, ask, and knock, forgive us our sins, strengthen us in our weakness, and lead us in the paths of justice and peace. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Almighty God, you call us to seek your will and to live according to your guidance. Grant that we may always

desire what is right and have the courage and perseverance to carry it out, even when the path is difficult. Open our hearts to your presence, that our prayers may be sincere, our actions may reflect your love, and our lives may bear witness to your mercy and grace. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY:

Once, in the royal court of Persia, a young Jewish woman named Esther faced a life-or-death moment. Her people were under threat, and the royal advisor Haman had already secured a decree for their destruction. Esther could do nothing alone—yet she could do something with God. She prayed with her whole heart: “Come to help, for I am alone and have no one but you, Lord.” Then, gathering courage, she entered the king’s presence, exposed Haman’s plot, and won the king’s protection for her people. Her prayer, born of vulnerability and trust, became the source of strength for action, and her people were saved.

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls each of us to a similar kind of faith: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you." He invites us to persistent prayer, to keep knocking on God's door, just as he himself did in his life. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, asking for strength; he prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail; he even prayed for those who crucified him. Prayer often arises in our own moments of distress, and yet, like Jesus, our petitions are never wasted.

It is natural to struggle when prayers seem unanswered. We pray for healing, for peace, for relief, and nothing changes—or at least not in the way we hoped. Saint Paul experienced this too with his "thorn in the flesh." Yet God's response came in grace and strength: "My power is made perfect in weakness." Prayer, even when it does not bring immediate change, opens us to God's presence and shapes us to live according to his will.

Jesus also teaches us what to ask for: the coming of God's kingdom, God's will in our lives, our daily bread,

forgiveness, and the strength to remain faithful. The purest prayer of petition is always rooted in God's will, as Jesus modeled in Gethsemane: beginning with our desires, but ending in surrender, "Your will be done." And our prayers are not only for ourselves—they shape how we relate to others. The Golden Rule reminds us that to ask God for good things is to learn how to treat others with the same generosity we seek.

Lent reminds us that we are always seekers, journeying toward God, never fully arriving this side of eternity. But we are never alone in this search. God is already at work in our lives, responding, guiding, and opening doors we did not know existed.

I recall a young mother I once met who was desperate for her child's recovery from a long illness. Night after night, she prayed and knocked on God's door. The child's condition did not improve immediately, and she felt her prayers were unanswered. Yet over time, she noticed small changes in her own heart—patience, hope, compassion—that transformed how she cared for her child and how she

lived each day. In the end, her prayer had indeed been answered, not by erasing the struggle, but by opening her to God's grace and presence.

Like Esther and like that mother, our asking, seeking, and knocking invite God's power into our lives. And as Jesus promises, God's good gifts await those who persist. We step forward in faith, trusting that even in weakness, even in uncertainty, we are never alone.

Some years later, the mother I mentioned at the beginning brought her now-grown child to the church. She remembered the nights of desperation and the prayers poured out from her heart. She realized that every "knock" and every "ask" had drawn her closer to God, shaped her heart, and given her strength she could never have found on her own. Lent reminds us that prayer is not only about getting answers—it is about being formed by God, trusting in his providence, and opening ourselves to his mercy. May we, too, be bold in our asking, diligent in our seeking, and persistent in our knocking, confident that God is always with us.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father,
who invites us to ask with trust, to seek with faith,
and to knock with persevering hearts.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,
as we present these offerings before you,
receive them as a sign of our trust and dependence on
your mercy.
Purify our hearts through this sacrifice,
strengthen us in perseverance,
and teach us to seek your will in all things.
May this offering draw us closer to you
and shape our lives according to your love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

In your great mercy, you call us to seek you, to ask for your guidance, and to trust in your unfailing love. You desire that we open our hearts fully to you, not only in moments of need but in every aspect of our lives. In this season of Lent, you invite us to honest reflection, to recognize our dependence on your grace, and to deepen our relationship with you through persistent prayer and sincere action.

You have shown us through your Son, Jesus Christ, the power of turning to you with faith: in times of fear, sorrow, and uncertainty, he asked, sought, and knocked in prayer, trusting your will above his own. Through him, we are called to follow your way, to live according to your will, and to bring your mercy to the world.

And so, with all the angels and saints, we proclaim your glory, as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts...

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER II

Before Epiclesis for personal meditation only:

Lord, send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts. Transform this bread and wine into the Body and Blood of your Son, that we may be nourished in faith and strengthened in hope. As we receive these gifts, open our hearts to your presence, that we may persevere in asking, seeking, and knocking in prayer. Shape us to live in your love, to act justly, and to serve our neighbors with generosity, guided by your wisdom.

After Anamnesis:

Father, we remember that your Son offered himself for the life of the world. May this sacrifice draw us ever closer to you, opening our hearts to your will. Transform us, that we may live according to your purposes, and let every action of our lives reflect the mercy, patience, and love we receive in this Eucharist. May we never cease to seek your kingdom, trust in your providence, and bring your grace into our daily lives.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Trusting in the mercy of God and confident in his love for us, let us now pray as Jesus taught us, with boldness and hope:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil and from every trial that would separate us from your love. Guard us from sin and guide us in holiness. Strengthen our hearts in this Lenten season, that we may persevere in asking, seeking, and knocking, and that your kingdom may grow within us and through us. Grant us the peace of Christ, that we may live in hope, act in charity, and remain faithful until the day of your eternal glory.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: *“Peace I leave you; my peace I give you.”* Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church. Guide us with your wisdom, strengthen us with your Spirit, and unite us in your love. May this peace guide our thoughts, our words, and our

actions. May it inspire us to reconciliation where there is conflict, hope where there is despair, and courage where there is weakness. Keep us faithful to your call, and make us instruments of your peace in our families, our communities, and in the world. You live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. As we approach this table, let us recognize that in receiving Christ, we are called to imitate his life of asking, seeking, and knocking—persistently turning to God in prayer and opening ourselves to his will. May this communion strengthen us to carry the presence of Christ into every aspect of our lives.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

As we leave this table, let us carry the lessons of Esther and the words of Jesus in our hearts. Every prayer we lift,

every act of love we perform, and every step we take toward God's kingdom is an opportunity to encounter his grace. Persist in asking, seeking, and knocking. Trust that God hears your prayers, even in silence, and that your life can be transformed by his presence. Go in peace, strengthened by this Eucharist, to live as a faithful witness of God's love.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Loving Father,
we thank you for nourishing us at this table with the Body and Blood of your Son. May this Eucharist strengthen us to persevere in prayer, to ask with trust, to seek with faith, and to knock with courage. Help us to carry the lessons of Esther and the words of Jesus into our daily lives, opening our hearts to your will, acting with mercy, and serving others with generosity. May the grace we have received shape our thoughts, our words, and our actions, so that in all things we live as faithful witnesses of your love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May Almighty God, who calls us to seek, ask, and knock, strengthen you in faith, fill you with hope, and deepen your trust in his mercy.

May Christ, who prays for us unceasingly, guide your hearts to do his will and grant you the courage to follow him faithfully.

And may the Holy Spirit, who transforms our prayers and actions, lead you into all truth, peace, and love. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you +.....**Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go forth, asking, seeking, and knocking, confident that God is always near.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

In this Lenten season, remember the courage of Esther, who prayed from the depths of her need, and the promise of Jesus: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you."

Our prayers may not always be answered in the way we expect, but every sincere cry, every act of seeking, opens our hearts to God's grace. This week, pay attention to your own prayers: ask boldly, seek faithfully, and knock persistently, trusting that God is shaping your life, even in silence.

Friday of the 1st Week of Lent

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

INTRODUCTION

“I tell you...” – in these words of Jesus, we hear the call of something entirely new, the reign of God he proclaims. The demands of Jesus on those who inherit this kingdom are high. We, too, must constantly examine how faithfully we live as Christians. Lent invites us to reflect on how well our lives are aligned with God’s Word—not to linger on failure, but to follow Jesus’ path again and again.

A story is told of two neighbors who had lived side by side for years in relative peace. One day, a small misunderstanding over a fence escalated. Harsh words were exchanged, and soon bitterness began to build. Weeks later, one of them realized that the anger he harbored had grown far beyond the original disagreement. It had taken root in his heart and threatened to destroy the relationship completely. Gathering courage, he went to his neighbor, apologized, and sought reconciliation. That

simple act transformed not only the fence dispute but the whole tone of their community.

Today's readings invite us to a similar reflection: how do we deal with anger, bitterness, and estrangement in our hearts? How do we foster reconciliation and life?

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord, Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God is near to us in you. You call us to a life of mercy, love, and justice. We confess that too often we harbor anger, speak words that wound, and allow bitterness to take root in our hearts.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, Jesus, you came to heal the broken-hearted and to reconcile us with God and with one another. Forgive us when we fail to act justly, when we turn away from those in need, or when we nurture resentment in our hearts. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, Jesus, you call us beyond the law to a higher virtue, a life rooted in your love. Strengthen us by your Spirit, that

we may forgive, seek reconciliation, and speak words that build up rather than destroy. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who is rich in mercy, look upon our hearts, cleanse us from all our sins, and restore us to the joy of life in Christ and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God, you call your people to conversion and the renewal of the heart. Grant that, by the disciplines of this Lenten season, we may grow in holiness, deepen our faith, and live according to your Word. May the sacrifices we offer, the prayers we lift, and the works of love we perform bear abundant fruit in our lives, so that your Spirit may kindle in us the fire of divine love, now and forever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A story is told of two neighbors who had lived side by side for years in relative peace. One day, a small misunderstanding over a fence escalated. Harsh words were exchanged, and soon bitterness began to build. Weeks later, one of them realized that the anger he harbored had grown far beyond the original disagreement. It had taken root in his heart and threatened to destroy the relationship completely. Gathering courage, he went to his neighbor, apologized, and sought reconciliation. That simple act transformed not only the fence dispute but the whole tone of their community.

In today's Gospel, Jesus invites us into a similar awareness of how life truly unfolds. Humans often think in terms of balancing the scales: "An eye for an eye, a favor for a favor." Jesus offers a higher justice. He begins with a familiar commandment: "You shall not kill." Many of us might think, "This doesn't concern me; I have not killed anyone." Yet Jesus goes deeper. He speaks of anger toward a brother or sister, of insulting another, even of

rejecting someone's faith. The destruction of life, he tells us, often begins long before the act itself—in the heart, in our words, in attitudes left unchecked.

Jesus' teaching calls us to a virtue deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees. He asks us to look not only at our actions but at the roots of those actions: our emotions, our words, our choices. Anger, though a normal human emotion, can become a destructive force if nurtured. Even seemingly small words—name-calling, disrespect, contempt—can shape relationships in ways that lead to harm. Jesus invites us to attend to these inner currents of our hearts and to allow the Spirit of God to transform them. "Come, Holy Spirit, fill my heart, and kindle in me the fire of your love." Through this Spirit, Christ lives within us, shaping our hearts and guiding our actions toward life rather than harm.

Lent is a season to cultivate this inner life. It asks us to examine our hearts and to seek reconciliation before conflict escalates. Jesus reminds us that restoring relationships is sometimes more urgent than ritual worship:

“Leave your offering there before the altar and be reconciled first.” God’s justice, as Ezekiel reminds us, is about life, not punishment. God calls us to turn from wrongdoing, to live righteously, and to enable life for one another.

Our challenge, then, is to look honestly at our own hearts. Where is anger lurking? Where are the words that wound or the attitudes that divide? Lent invites us to surrender these to God, trusting that the Holy Spirit can form in us the deeper virtue Jesus calls us to. This is the work of life—transforming our hearts so that our actions and words foster life, healing, and love in the world around us.

Returning to our opening story, the neighbor who chose reconciliation modeled what Jesus calls us to do: not merely avoiding harm but actively restoring life. Each act of reconciliation, each effort to transform anger into understanding, each word spoken with care, brings the kingdom of God closer to our hearts and our world. Lent is our invitation to take that step—to allow God to root out

anger, to heal estrangement, and to kindle the fire of love deep within us.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our offerings may be pleasing to God, who calls us to a higher justice and a deeper love. Let us unite our hearts in gratitude and pray that, through these gifts, we may be strengthened in virtue, reconciled with one another, and conformed ever more closely to Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, we offer these gifts, signs of our lives and our hearts. May the bread we bring become a source of your life within us, and may the wine become a witness to the joy of your Spirit. Transform us, O Lord, that our anger may be healed, our estrangements reconciled, and our words and deeds reflect your love. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

In this season of Lent, we remember how your Spirit calls us to a deeper life, one that goes beyond the letter of the law to the transformation of the heart.

You call us to forgive our enemies, reconcile with those who are estranged, and nurture the life and dignity of every person. Through Christ, you show us the path to true virtue, rooted not in obligation but in love.

And so, with all the angels and saints, we proclaim your glory without end:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

Before Epiclesis only for personal meditation:

Lord, send forth your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts we bring. May this bread and wine become for us the living body and blood of Christ, forming our hearts in your

love. Transform our anger into compassion, our bitterness into forgiveness, and our words into instruments of life. Strengthen us to live in harmony with one another and with your will, now and always.

After the Anamnesis (after “Do this in memory of me”):

As we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, may we be filled with your Spirit, renewed in our inner hearts, and made instruments of your peace in the world. May the love of Christ dwell in us richly, enabling us to forgive, reconcile, and act justly, reflecting the justice and mercy of your kingdom in all we do.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Jesus teaches us that God judges not only our actions but the intentions of our hearts. Let us now pray to our heavenly Father, asking that we may turn from anger, seek reconciliation, and be transformed by his love:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil: from the bitterness and anger that harm our hearts, from the estrangements that divide your people, and from the temptations that lead us away from your life. Graciously grant peace in our days, so that, supported by your mercy, we may be free from sin and safe from all distress, while we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: *“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”* Grant us that same peace, O Lord, a peace that heals wounds, reconciles hearts, and restores unity. Look not on our sins, but on our longing to follow you faithfully. Strengthen your Church, that we may live in harmony, speak with gentleness, and act with love. May your Spirit guide us to be instruments of reconciliation, sowing justice, mercy, and life wherever we go. You live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Come to the table of Christ, not as one who is perfect, but as one who seeks healing. Receive the Bread of Life that renews hearts, transforms anger into compassion, and restores what has been broken. Let this feast strengthen you to forgive, reconcile, and live the deeper virtue that Jesus calls us to in this Lenten season. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The first full week of Lent is drawing to a close. My resolutions for this season are still present, but I feel the first momentum fading. Doubts arise in my heart. Will I truly reach the goals I set, perhaps hastily? Do I now see my limits more clearly, boundaries I reach all too quickly? Lord, strengthen me with this bread for the journey I want to follow during this time. Give me the energy and courage I need so that the kingdom of heaven shines through my

life, and so that my words and actions become a light for others.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, that I may love where there is hatred; forgive where there is injury; unite where there is conflict; speak truth where there is error; bring faith where there is doubt; inspire hope where there is despair; bring light where darkness reigns; and bring joy where sorrow dwells. May your Spirit dwell deeply in me, forming the roots of a life fully aligned with your will.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

May the grace of this Eucharist, O Lord, strengthen us to turn from wrongdoing and to seek reconciliation with those we have wronged. May it inspire us to act justly, to nurture life, and to live in harmony with one another. Grant that, through your Spirit, our hearts may be renewed and our lives transformed, so that the love of Christ may shine through us in all we do. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord keep your hearts open to his Spirit, your minds attuned to his Word, and your lives guided by his love.

May he transform our anger into compassion, our estrangements into reconciliation, and our words into instruments of life. **Amen.**

And may almighty God bless you +.....**Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life, forgiving as you have been forgiven, and loving as you have been loved.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

God's justice is greater than the law, for God is love. Hope is sown—be the soil where it can grow.

May this week, this Lent, and every day of our lives, be a moment to cultivate hearts of peace, words of kindness, and deeds of reconciliation.

Saturday of the 1st Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48

INTRODUCTION

It is often easy and comfortable to have no personal opinion and simply follow the habits of others—"people think," "people say," "people do." Yet each of us is responsible for our thoughts and actions. We cannot hide behind others. As Christians, we are called to speak and act as Jesus Christ has shown us. Ordinary rules no longer apply. The measure of our actions is not what others do, but the love of God.

Today we also remember Saint Casimir, who lived in 15th-century Poland. He was to become King of Hungary, but he refused political maneuvering. He chose instead to live faithfully by the commandments of Jesus and the example of Mary, dying at only 26 years old.

Faith means striving for union between God and humanity, for partnership with God. We are, as the hymn reminds us, God's own. Remembering this shapes how we live and how we treat others—in thought, word, and deed. Let us

prepare our hearts to enter this sacred celebration, seeking the mercy of God.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ, you call us to love beyond our instincts and to pray for those who have wronged us. Yet we confess that too often we respond to anger with anger, bitterness with bitterness, and hurt with retaliation. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you show us the way of the cross, a path of self-giving and divine love. We have failed to pray for our enemies, to seek reconciliation, and to act with mercy toward others. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ, you call us to perfection as God is perfect, to love inclusively and without limits. Forgive us when we limit our love, cling to grudges, or allow resentment to harden our hearts. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who is rich in mercy, free us from our sins and transform our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. May we be strengthened to love those who have hurt us, to pray for our enemies, and to follow the path of Christ, who overcomes evil with good. And may Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Eternal Father, turn our hearts toward you, that we may seek what is truly necessary and glorify you through works of love. Help us to receive your Spirit that we may love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, and overcome evil with good. May your grace guide our thoughts, words, and deeds, so that our lives reflect the divine love of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A story is told of a teacher who, during a school trip, found herself being treated rudely and unfairly by a small group of students. Initially, she felt anger and resentment rising within her. But instead of reacting in kind, she prayed silently for them, asking God to help them find kindness and understanding. Over time, her patience and compassion began to influence the students. They changed—not because they were forced, but because they experienced love that did not retaliate. This story shows in miniature what Jesus calls us to in today's Gospel: a love that goes beyond instinct, a love that transforms hearts. Christians are not better or worse than others, generally speaking. Yet then we hear Jesus' challenge in today's Gospel: "If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what is extraordinary about that? Don't the pagans do the same?" Jesus calls us to more.

Occasionally we come across people who have taken this teaching to heart. They have suffered at the hands of enemies, yet they hold no bitterness. They do not wish to repay evil with evil. Instead, they pray for their persecutors and wish them well. Witnessing such people inspires respect, admiration, and a sense of what is truly noble in human nature. Jesus calls this divine love—the kind of love that reflects God's own mercy. Saint Paul reminds us that God demonstrates his love for us even while we were still sinners; the cross is the ultimate proof of God's love for enemies and for the undeserving.

The call of the Gospel is challenging. Loving our enemy is not about feelings; it is an act of the will. We may struggle to identify someone as an enemy, but we can often name those who have hurt or offended us. Jesus invites us to wish them well, to pray for their well-being, and to act with goodness and generosity, even when provoked. This is the essence of the divine love to which he calls us. As Paul writes, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Jesus also calls us to perfection—not perfection as the world understands it, but perfection as God embodies it: merciful, inclusive, and divine in quality. To be perfect as God is perfect is to love without limits, even to include those who persecute or harm us. We cannot do this on our own. The Spirit of God—the Spirit of love—empowers us. Through prayer, reflection, and the gift of the Spirit, we can grow in the extraordinary love Jesus demands, the love that reconciles, heals, and transforms both ourselves and others.

Lent invites us to take this challenge seriously: to examine our hearts, confront the grudges we hold, and open ourselves to the Spirit who enables divine love. Prayer, especially for those who have wronged us, is a powerful act of freedom. It releases us from the bondage of resentment and fear and allows God's justice and mercy to take root in our hearts.

Returning to our opening story, the teacher's quiet prayer for those who treated her unfairly demonstrates the power of this love. It changes not only those who are prayed for

but also the one who prays. Lent calls us to step into this practice, to exercise patience, mercy, and the will to love beyond instinct, reflecting God's own perfection in our lives.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts we offer may be pleasing to God, who calls us to a life of divine love and mercy and acceptable to our almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, accept these gifts we bring in gratitude for your mercy. May this bread nourish our hearts and your wine strengthen our spirits, that we may love without limits, forgive those who persecute us, and reflect your divine love in all our actions. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

In this season of Lent, you call us to a life of deeper conversion, to examine our hearts and to turn away from sin, anger, and resentment. You invite us to follow the path of your Son, Jesus Christ, who teaches us not only to love our neighbors but to love even our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.

Through this extraordinary love, we see your mercy revealed, your justice fulfilled, and your Spirit at work within us, transforming our hearts and minds.

By the power of your Spirit, we are strengthened to overcome evil with good, to act with forgiveness, and to seek reconciliation where there is division. You do not call us to a minimal or convenient love, but to a love that reflects your divine perfection—a love that is patient, merciful, and inclusive, embracing all, even those who oppose us.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, with thrones and dominions, and with all the hosts of heaven, we proclaim your glory, and without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

Before Epiclesis for personal meditation only:

Send forth your Holy Spirit, O Lord, upon us and upon these gifts, that this bread and wine may become the Body and Blood of Christ. Transform our hearts, heal our anger, and root in us a love that forgives, reconciles, and overcomes evil with good. May this Eucharist strengthen us to live as God's children, reflecting divine mercy in all we do.

After Anamnesis (after "Do this in memory of me"):

As we receive your Body and Blood, may the Spirit fill us with courage to love without limits, to pray for those who harm us, and to act with justice and mercy. May this sacrament be a source of transformation, guiding our hearts to the deeper virtue Jesus calls us to and shaping our lives in accordance with your will.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Jesus teaches us that God judges not only our actions but the intentions of our hearts. Let us now pray to our heavenly Father, asking that we may turn from anger, seek reconciliation, and be transformed by his love:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil—especially the evil of anger, resentment, and division that dwells in our hearts. Grant that, by the power of your Spirit, we may forgive those who have harmed us, pray for those who persecute us, and act with mercy toward all.

May your Son, who overcomes every form of evil by his cross, strengthen us to love as you love, to reflect your perfection in our daily lives, and to bring peace, reconciliation, and life wherever we go, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: *“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”* Look not upon our sins, but on our desire to follow you faithfully. Strengthen your Church, that we may live in harmony, forgive freely, and act with mercy toward all, even our enemies. May your Spirit guide us in every word and action, so that your peace may reign in our hearts and in the world. You live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the table of Christ, not as one who is perfect, but as one who seeks healing. Receive the Bread of Life that renews hearts, transforms anger into compassion, and restores what has been broken. Let this feast strengthen you to forgive, reconcile, and live the deeper virtue that Jesus calls us to in this Lenten season.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Lord, I struggle to love my enemies. I cannot yet pray for my persecutors. I feel like wishing them harm or taking revenge. I know this is wrong. It saddens me that I still cannot love everyone fully.

Help me, Lord, to reflect on the good in those I consider my enemies, to see what in them is lovable, and to pray that the evil in their hearts may lessen and that they may act in goodness. Strengthen me with your Spirit, that the love you give may flow through me and transform my words, my actions, and my heart.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

May the grace of this Eucharist inspire us to follow the path of Christ: to forgive freely, to love without limits, and to pray for those who harm us. May it deepen our hearts in divine love, reconcile our relationships, and strengthen us to live according to the call of the Gospel, overcoming evil with good. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

May the Spirit of Christ fill your hearts with courage to love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, and act with mercy.

May your lives reflect God's perfect love, your words bring reconciliation, and your actions embody divine justice and peace.

And may almighty God bless you +.....**Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go forth in the love of Christ, forgiving those who hurt you, praying for those who oppose you, and striving always to overcome evil with good.

TAKE HOME THOUGHT

Jesus calls us to a love that transcends instinct, a love that prays for enemies and forgives freely. Life is both a gift and a task from God; may we embrace it with hearts open to reconciliation, mercy, and the divine love that transforms all things.