

Read



Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6,
12-13, 17

Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12,
17-19

Matthew 4:1-11

First Sunday of Lent

February 22, 2026



REFLECTION

Before beginning his public ministry, Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray for forty days. There, he experienced temptations. These temptations foreshadow some of the challenges, opposition, and misunderstandings Jesus would later face in his ministry. They also demonstrate the power of Jesus over Satan and his lies.

In one of these temptations, Satan tempts Jesus to test God's protection. Jesus' refusal emphasizes the difference between authentic faith and presumption. Rather than seeking to control or manipulate the Father's intervention, Jesus models for us a faith that trusts without imposing conditions. This encourages us to embrace humility and patience in our journey of faith.

As Christ emerged from the wilderness and this time of testing, he went forth with a clarified sense of purpose, setting the tone for a ministry marked by humility, compassion, and unwavering dedication to the kingdom of God. As we head into the forty days of Lent, let's embrace a deepened reliance on God's guidance so that we may be prepared for God's unique call and mission for each of us.



ACTION

In these temptations, Christ resisted worldly goods and powers. Identify one area in your life where you find it difficult to prioritize spiritual goods and nourishment over immediate gratification. Set a specific, achievable goal to practice delaying gratification this Lent.

“Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins.”

—St. John Chrysostom



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Reflect on a time when you had to trust in God's plan despite not fully understanding it. How did that experience shape your faith?
- ❖ How can you lean on your faith to overcome temptation this Lent?

Introduction to **LENT**



The Season

Lent is a season that captures the hearts and minds of Catholics each year, perhaps surprisingly so, since it is a season of penitence, of reordering, and of gaining new focus in our lives as Christians. And yet, maybe this is exactly why the season is so popular. We all know that we fall short in our lives as Christ's disciples. Lent offers an annual time in which to get our act together. This forty-day period in which to turn our lives more fully toward Christ provides a designated time in which to turn away from sin, to participate in specific, traditional practices that will aid our spiritual growth, and to embrace ongoing conversion in Christ as the pattern of our lives.

The roots of the season as preparation for the initiation of the elect as they journey toward the Easter Vigil help to bring the season to life. As thousands of people throughout the world prepare for initiation, we grasp more fully the blessing and challenge of our own baptism, and commit ourselves to Christ to a greater degree with our lives.

Celebrating the Scrutinies

This year, we are in the cycle of Year A readings, which means that the Gospel readings heard on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent are used in the celebration of the scrutinies with the elect, that is, those preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil. Find out the names of the elect in your parish and share them with the young people, encouraging them to keep these individuals in their prayers this Lent.

Celebrating Lent with Teens

The focus of Lent, with our admission that we sometimes fail to live as Christ's people, is particularly appealing to teens who are ready to take their lives of faith more seriously. It is helpful to remind them that the season is not wholly focused on giving up, but rather might be approached as taking up a practice or habit that will contribute to greater Christian living in the future. The traditional acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving or works of charity provide the necessary structure by which young people may fully participate in the season. Inviting teens to intentionally embrace the season by participating in the liturgies, making and keeping Lenten resolutions, and reflecting weekly on the Gospel will enhance their spiritual growth as individuals and as members of the faith community.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

The liturgical color for Lent is violet, and the Lenten environment is often bare of other adornment, as a means of furthering the reflective and penitential tone of the season. You might include a few bare branches and a crucifix to enhance the Lenten focus of your prayer. It is possible to add a small element each week to draw out the Gospel message, or simply include a Bible or lectionary, open to the Gospel passage for Sunday.



February 22, 2026

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #22A

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19

Matthew 4:1-11

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

After his baptism in Matthew 3, Jesus immediately retreats to the desert, "led by the Spirit," and faces temptation. The things that Jesus is tempted with are parallel to the things that the Israelites struggled with in their wandering in the desert for forty years. Some of that time of wandering is recounted in the Book of Deuteronomy, which also recounts the laws and promises God gave the people. Deuteronomy is also where Jesus' Scripture references in today's Gospel reading come from. Underlying all of the temptations Jesus faces is the act of putting oneself or something else above God. This was something the Israelites struggled with, and it is something that we struggle with today. Jesus' responses to the temptations show us that remaining faithful to God and turning to his Word can help us overcome the temptations we face in our daily lives.

Q FOCUS: Like Jesus in the desert, we should turn to sacrifice, prayer, and Scripture to strengthen us against the devil.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. Polycarp (c. 69–c.155) is remembered by the Church on February 23. Polycarp was a disciple of St. John (the apostle and evangelist) and was the bishop of Smyrna. Some of his writing has been preserved, as well as the account of his martyrdom. Quite advanced in years—he was at least eighty-six

years old—the Roman authorities tried to burn him at the stake, but the fire did not touch him, so they beheaded him.

Church Teaching Connection

"This first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel recalls the themes of temptation, conversion and the Good News. . . . Jesus goes into the desert to prepare himself for his mission in the world. He does not need conversion, but as a man, he must go through this trial, both for himself, to obey the Father's will, and for us, to give us the grace to overcome temptation. . . . For us too, Lent is a time of spiritual 'contest', of spiritual struggle: we are called to confront the Evil One through prayer in order to be able, with God's help, to overcome him in our daily life" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, February 18, 2018).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory.

Gospel

Matthew 4:1-11

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are

the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: *One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, *You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*" Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: *The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.*"

Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

A few weeks ago, we recalled Jesus' baptism by John. Today, we read about Jesus being tempted by Satan. In both cases, Jesus' nature as being fully human and fully divine are on display. Jesus didn't need a baptism of repentance because he is like us in all things except for sin—there was nothing to repent from. Yet his baptism highlights his divine identity through the voice of the Father speaking and the Spirit coming down upon him. In today's Gospel, he shows us that all human beings are subject to temptation, but that by uniting oneself with God's will and turning to God for strength, a person can overcome these temptations.

► **What do these events in Jesus' life teach you about your life as a Christian?**

Through these episodes, Jesus shows us the ways in which we can follow him more closely as we journey with him to our eternal life. We need baptism to wash away our sins. Participating in other sacraments also helps us since they fill us with God's grace. We need to turn to prayer and Scripture to help us stand strong against the devil and combat the temptations in our world.

At the core of each temptation is the way Satan tries to have Jesus go against the greatest commandment to love God above all things. In the first, the temptation is to find our source in things other than God. In the second temptation, the devil asks Jesus to be distrustful of God, by putting God's care to the test. Similar to the first, the third temptation is to put other things (power and prestige) above God. Putting those things above God is like worshipping them instead of giving our worship to God. In all of these, something else is trying to take the place that God should have in our life.

► **Are the things Jesus was tempted with things that we are tempted with in today's world? What might these temptations look like for young people?**

When we sin, we choose to listen to the enemy's voice instead of the truth and love of God's voice. The devil tells us lies about the world, about God, and about ourselves. They might seem like good things, but they will ultimately lead us away from God. They will cause us to question who we truly are as beloved sons and daughters of God. This can lead to us to disbelieve in God's love and our own worthiness. Sin clouds our vision so that it is harder for us to see God's work in the world and the worth of others.

During Lent, we are called to take up the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The small sacrifices that we make can strengthen us in our fight against sin—if we can say no to a piece of chocolate, we are giving our ability to say no to Satan a good workout and making it stronger. Turning to Scripture and prayer, like Jesus did, can also strengthen our ability to say no to sin. If we keep the Word of God in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts, it will be harder for Satan to get a word in.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 142.

The temptation in the desert shows Jesus' humanity and divinity.

Jesus responds to temptation by relying on God's word, as it is found in Scripture.

At the heart of sin is choosing a way that is not God's way; this is something that all people struggle with.

Act on the Word

Lenten Prayer Boxes

For this activity, you will need small boxes (such as shoeboxes), paper and pens, markers or colored pencils, glue, scissors, and magazines or newspapers. You will also need Bibles for the teens or allow them to search for Scripture passages online.

Explain to the teens that the length of Lent can sometimes be overwhelming and that it is important to be prepared for this time. They will be creating prayer boxes that they can use throughout Lent to remain focused on following God's will and praying for others.

Give each teen a box or have teens bring in a shoebox for themselves. Have the teens decorate their boxes with images that remind them of the desert spirit of Lent. They can look through magazines and newspapers for pictures of sand, stones, people at prayer, pathways, and so on. If magazines or newspapers aren't available or if no appropriate pictures are found, teens can draw those images on paper and cut them out to decorate their boxes. On paper, teens should write out several Scripture passages that they think will help them during this season. They can cut out these verses and add them to the decoration of their boxes.

Once the decoration of the boxes is complete, give each young person a few sheets of paper and a pen. Encourage them to take some time in reflection and come up with forty people or things that the teens can pray for, or deeds or actions, such as donating clothes, being kind, and so on, that teens

can complete during this season. They could also include some sacrifices they want to make during this time. The young people can discuss with one other their ideas to help them compose their lists.

Once teens have completed their list of forty intentions or deeds for Lent, they should cut out each of the items and put them into their shoebox. Each day during Lent (excluding Sundays), teens should reach into their shoebox and complete the action that they draw out.

Closing Prayer

*Merciful God,
we seek your tender compassion in all our
ways and for all our sins.
You gave to your Son Jesus the power to heal;
give us the grace to seek forgiveness
and to renew our desire to live in
communion with all our brothers and sisters.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.