

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

LIVING THE WORD

First Sunday of Lent

March 1, 2020



REFLECTION

It is sometimes easy to forget that Jesus is both fully God and fully human. We can recall the many miracles Jesus performs—healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, even raising someone from the dead—but we do not as easily remember the human qualities. Jesus walked and talked, loved and learned, and today's Gospel notes another important human quality that we might initially overlook. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry.

Jesus is not some foreign, distant being with whom we share nothing in common. Rather, Jesus became one of us so that we might better know how to be fully human. When we are lonely, scared, and frustrated we can take comfort knowing that Jesus experienced the same feelings. Likewise, when we are overjoyed, hopeful and excited, we know that Jesus knew these feelings, too.

We grow in relationship with others through our shared experiences. Sometimes these experiences center on similar interests, while other times these experiences are rooted in similar feelings. Either way, we become closer to a person or group of people through sharing. The same is true for our relationship with Jesus.



ACTION

As we begin this season of Lent we have the opportunity to grow in relationship with the God who shares so much in common with us. One simple way to do this is to tell Jesus how and what you feel as you go through the day. Jesus, I'm tired this morning. Jesus, I'm really excited to spend time with my friends this weekend. Jesus, I feel helpless as I watch my uncle's health deteriorate. Take a few moments this week to stop and tell Jesus how you feel. Nothing is too insignificant.

*"Calm the tormenting
anxieties of your heart . . ."*



—St. Padre Pio

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are some of the temptations you face each day? How do you respond? Do you tell Jesus about the temptations?
- ❖ How can you grow in your relationship with Jesus during 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 initiation and the participation of the elect and candidates as they journey toward the Easter Vigil help to bring the season to life—as they prepare for initiation (or completion of 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 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 youth 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 for 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.



March 1, 2020

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

Temptation is an unpleasant part of everyone's lives. How we respond to temptation and how we manage ourselves in such situations matters absolutely. As Lent begins, Catholics are preparing themselves for the Resurrection through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. How are your students preparing for the Lord's resurrection?

Q FOCUS: *God's people are challenged in their Lenten deserts.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Using the liturgical calendar, find today's date. Note the penitential color of Lent used on the calendar (violet), and show the students how to recognize the fasting days of Lent. Take note of the saints' days in the upcoming week, especially Sts. Perpetua and Felicity. If time permits, tell the students about these holy women and their steadfast faith.

Church Teaching Connection

'Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God the first principle and the last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world but the natural light of human reason.' Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created 'in the image of God'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 36; quoting *Dei filius*, 2; *Dei verbum*, 6; and referencing Genesis 1:27).

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.

Glory to you, O Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

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. 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:

Lent is a time of penance and preparation to renew one's Baptism at Easter.

► How do you celebrate Lent?

► Do you think of Lent as a time to prepare to renew your Baptism? What do you think this means?

In today's Gospel, we find Jesus in the desert where he has gone for forty days of prayer and fasting. Those forty days are our template for the Lenten season that we are now observing. As Lent begins, you have probably considered to follow a Lenten discipline of fasting and prayer. Ask yourself how that discipline is faring. If you are struggling to meet your chosen discipline, ask yourself how you can attain success. During Lent, find out when reconciliation is offered and prepare yourself to receive the sacrament.

In the Gospel reading today we read about Jesus being tempted in the desert. Temptation is something that each of us experiences in life. Likewise, at different points in time we all vary in our success in resisting temptation. Jesus, however, was tempted by the Devil in a very direct manner, and did not give into the Devil's challenges. The back-and-forth conversation we heard in the reading resembles rabbinical theological debate, as both Jesus and

Satan used scripture. The temptations themselves have theological significance. Since Jesus had gone into the desert to pray and fast, and would have been very hungry. Being fully human, Jesus felt his hunger just like any of us might feel hunger. The Devil challenged Jesus, as if Jesus should prove himself to the Devil. "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread" (Matthew 4:3), the Devil said to him. Jesus, however, quoted Scripture in response, not giving into the challenge to his pride or his relationship with the Father. Jesus answered with sureness in himself, in God and in his choice.

The Devil next challenged Jesus to prove that God would protect him, and Jesus refused, again quoting Scripture that says we shouldn't test God. Indeed, we should trust God to keep his word, not test him in his promises. Lastly, the Devil promised him land and power, which could never give Jesus in the first place. Again, Jesus refused, and told the Devil to go away. Like Jesus, we too can look temptation in the face, and tell it to go away.

Although Jesus was tempted by the Devil, we are frequently tempted by other people in our lives.

► How often is your own pride challenged?

► How do you react when your pride is challenged?

► If someone challenges your pride, do you owe that person a response or feel the need to just "show" that the challenger is making ridiculous statements?

In life, all people will encounter those who want them to prove something—someone might tell you that you need to prove bravery, skill, daring, or love. These challenges are not healthy, and not something you need to do. Seek healthy responses that shut down such challenges.

► How would Jesus respond to such challenges?

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 146.

How are you tempted in our world today, and how do you deal with such temptations?

When you see friends meet temptation, how do you support them?

When Jesus met with temptation, he refused to give in, and eventually told the tempter to go away. How do you tell temptation to go away?

In this Lenten season, do you have any temptations you would like to address in the sacrament of reconciliation? Consider this question quietly to yourself.

Act on the Word

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient form of prayer, meditation and encountering scripture. The Latin phrase *Lectio Divina* means holy reading, and this form of prayer was used in the early centuries of the Church. Teach the young people this prayer form by first explaining the steps of the prayer. The main steps of *Lectio Divina* are as follows:

- ✧ Quiet the environment, the body and the mind.
- ✧ Read the selected Scripture passage slowly. (Use a passage from today's Gospel reading.)
- ✧ Pause for reflection, and read the passage again.
- ✧ Pause for reflection and read the passage a third time.
- ✧ Initiate discussion in small groups. Ask the students to discuss the words that drew their attention, how they connected with various aspects of the reading, and how they are called to act on what they learn about the reading.

Lenten Discipline Discussion

As a group, consider things the teens can do to earn or save money for an organization such as Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org) or Catholic Charities (www.catholiccharitiesusa.org). Let the young people brainstorm ideas such as donating money from their part time jobs, using money they'd normally spend on music, games or other media, or perhaps doing community service in exchange for canned goods for the parish's food bank. During the Lenten season, track the funds and nonperishable donations so the teens can see the impact their small sacrifices makes for others.

Closing Prayer

*Christ our Lord,
you resisted temptation through forty days in
the desert.*

*Be near us as we journey in the desert seeking
your way and truth.*

*May our Lenten disciplines mold us into
truer disciples
and in temptation may we find strength in
your love.*

*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.