

Read

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11,
12-13, 14-15

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13

LIVING THE WORD

First Sunday of Lent

March 10, 2019



REFLECTION

Stubbing your toe often leads to instant pain that is all consuming. Sometimes we need coping skills such as taking deep breaths to help us manage our reaction to the pain. Lent can sometimes feel this way. In order to fast, give alms, and pray throughout Lent, we must fully engage ourselves. When we are disciplined, we can set aside time to devote to these themes of Lent. In the Gospel we see Jesus step away from his ministry for forty days only to be tempted three times by the devil. Hunger, power, and popularity tempt Jesus in the desert. Jesus turns to Scripture with each temptation. When temptation rears its ugly head, resisting the urge to give in can cause much anxiety. If the temptation is satisfying our hunger for power or popularity it takes much discipline to just say no. Call to mind the words from Scripture: *"He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone"* (Luke 4:10). When we call to mind these powerful words then we know we are not alone. The pain will decrease like the swelling in a stubbed toe.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What temptations keep you from being present to your faith?
- ❖ As Lent begins, in what ways might you pray, give alms, and fast these forty days?



ACTION

While it is possible to limit pain and live life without much agony, most of us cannot avoid it. This week, when you find yourself in an impossible situation where you are physically in pain or on the verge of telling someone off because of what they said or did to you, pause and ask Jesus to be with you. Recall the words from the Gospel according to Luke that remind you that you are not alone. Trust that Jesus will calm your nerves, give you the strength to respond with kindness, and resist the temptation to turn away from God.



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. We can turn our lives more fully toward Christ during this forty-day period as it provides us with a designated time 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 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.

Special Scripture Readings

Lent is an important period of preparation for those who will be baptized at this year's Easter Vigil. These people are called the elect. On the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent, the elect participate in a public ritual taking place at Sunday Mass: the scrutinies. If the scrutinies take place in your parish, the Year A readings will be used instead of those for Year C. Because of this option, this resource includes additional sessions for the Year A readings and are found in the appendix beginning on page 247.

Lenten Environment

The place where you gather with teens should mirror the liturgical environment in the church worship space. 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.

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.



March 10, 2019

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #24C

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13

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

Today's Gospel tells the story of Satan tempting Jesus in the desert before he began his public ministry. It is a story of trial and a response to the things that could pull him away from his purpose and mission in this world. It also allows us to see how we too are tempted with choices, both in our day to day lives and in our spiritual journey.

Q FOCUS: *To make ourselves ready for God.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Lent focuses on the renewal of our Baptism through the traditional disciplines of prayer, fasting, and giving alms. The forty days of Lent are meant to prepare us for the three holiest days of the year: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday / Easter Sunday—the Sacred Paschal Triduum. Just as Jesus retreated to the desert for forty days to prepare for his public ministry so too do we enter the desert to spiritually prepare to celebrate the Paschal Mystery and the season of Easter.

Church Teaching Connection

When we pray the Lord's Prayer at Mass, the priest says the following text: "Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil / graciously grant peace in our days, / that, by the help of your mercy, / we may be always free from sin / and safe from all distress, / as we await the blessed hope / and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." This part of the prayer is

called the Embolism. More often than not, we zone out when this part of the prayer is said because we've heard it so many times. But look at the words. Are these not exactly the words we need to be praying when we are faced with temptation? Isn't this what we would say when we find ourselves in the midst of an important preparation and we are crippled with temptations, fears, and anxieties? Today's Gospel is a reminder of how Jesus is the one who can overcome any temptation. He gives us a model of how to resist. He is the one we beseech to grant us peace so we can abide in his mercy. Let us be reminded to do that and not zone out when we hear this part of the Mass, but clue into the great example Jesus gives us in today's Gospel.

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

Luke 4:1-13

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, *One does not live on bread alone.*" Then he took him up and showed

him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: / *You shall worship the Lord, your God, / and him alone shall you serve.*" / Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: / *He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you, / and: / With their hands they will support you, / lest you dash your foot against a stone.*" / Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, / *You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*" / When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

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:

Think of a time in your life when you've had to prepare for something well in advance. Maybe it was a huge test you had coming up in your most difficult class. Maybe it was a long trip you were about to take and you needed to pack your bags. Maybe you needed to clean the entire house, from top to bottom, to prepare for a family function.

► Whatever it may have been, what was it like to prepare for something remarkably important to you?

Today marks the beginning of Lent, and the Gospel we hear tells us exactly what we need to do during this holy season: get ready. Lent is a time of preparation and we see how Jesus prepares for one of the most important periods of his life—his public ministry. Jesus goes into the desert.

► Why?

Jesus goes into the desert to pray, to fast, and to contemplate the will of God and the mission of his public ministry. He is driven into the desert by the Spirit because this is the time he needs to get ready for the work he is going to do. The Spirit wants to prepare him for what is to come; just like we prepare for the important events and moments in our own life.

While Jesus is in the desert, he is tempted by the devil. He is attacked from all angles and threatened during this important time of preparation. Each temptation is specific to a desire of the flesh and of this material world that is both attractive and pleasing. The first temptation concerns physical food. Jesus is tempted to turn bread into stones. Thought it's not that physical food is bad or that Jesus is meant to starve in the desert, Jesus reminds the devil that we are made for far more than just physical comfort and satisfaction in the moment.

► What did you give up for Lent? Was it physical food (candy, soda, sweets)?

► Is it hard for you to avoid that item? Why?

The second temptation concerns earthly power. The devil tempts Jesus to bow down to him so that Jesus can be given control of everything he can see. Jesus promptly reminds the devil that there is only one God worthy of worship, and the devil is not that god.

► In your own life, what do you find yourself obsessed with?

► What have you paid more attention to than God? Is it your phone? Your computer? Your social media profile? Do you find yourself looking at that and giving your energy and attention to what is here rather than focusing on the Lord?

► What is something you could do to detach from the things that you find yourself worshipping and idolizing?

The third and final temptation concerns pride, specifically because the devil wants Jesus to prove that he is who he says he is. However, Jesus resists a third time. He doesn't need the devil to know who he is, because he is confident in himself and the power of his heavenly Father. Likewise, we are called to sincere trust and belief in God's greater power and will.

- ▶ What do you have a hard time trusting God with?
- ▶ Where do you struggle to surrender and give him control?
- ▶ Do you truly believe he will “catch you” or do you feel the need to constantly ask him to “prove himself” to you in small ways?
- ▶ Do you trust him in big ways too?

It may seem odd that Lent begins with a Gospel about Jesus being tempted. This reading shows us that Jesus also struggled; therefore, we are not alone when we struggle ourselves. Jesus gives us the perfect model of how we can remain steadfast in the Word, strong in our confidence that God is powerful, and resist what seems to be attractive and pleasing but is not eternally satisfying and life-giving.

Wrapping It Up

Ask these questions 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 154.

What do you struggle with most during Lent each year? What are you giving up this year? Why? What do you want to be protected from?

What temptation do you want to avoid the most during these forty days of preparation? How can you strengthen yourself?

Act on the Word

Place the participants in the main gathering space/area, as close to the middle as possible, and explain to them that each side of the room will be a choice or option that they will have. As you call out an choice/option, they will move to whichever side you indicate that option will be. For example, Coke to the left, Pepsi to the right, and so on. Call out the following choices or options to help warm them up / get them started (and feel free to make up your own).

- ✧ coke OR pepsi
- ✧ fried chicken OR grilled chicken
- ✧ hamburger OR hotdog

- ✧ early morning OR late night
- ✧ summer OR winter
- ✧ mountains OR beach
- ✧ rich and unintelligent OR poor and smart
- ✧ know when you’ll die and it be tragically painful OR die unexpectedly and peacefully

As they laugh through these various choices, and see what their fellow participants are choosing, tell them that the choices are going to get a bit tougher:

- ✧ get caught in a lie and be grounded by your parents OR don’t get caught but live with the internal guilt and shame
- ✧ don’t eat for forty days and get to heaven OR turn stones into bread so you don’t starve
- ✧ worship God and have no power OR worship the devil and be wealthy and influential

Feel free to make up more difficult or even more fun/silly choices to throw out there and get them thinking and talking. But in the end, make this primary point: when we are faced with choices, from whatever avenue and whatever perspective, we must see the bigger picture and look to the long term goal. Does this help me fulfill Christ’s mission for me on earth? Does this help me get closer to him? Is this what Jesus himself would do and choose when faced with this choice?

Closing Prayer

End the session with the Lord’s Prayer together. The youth minister, teacher, or catechist should include the Embolism from Mass.

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.