



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**First Sunday of Lent  
February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2026**

**Theme: "You must worship the Lord your God,  
and serve him alone."**

---

## **Gathering Prayer**

**Facilitator:** Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**All: Amen.**

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, <sup>3</sup> and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' <sup>4</sup> But he replied, 'Scripture says: *Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*'

<sup>5</sup> The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. <sup>6</sup> 'If you are the Son of God' he said 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: *He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.*' Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: *You must not put the Lord your God to the test.*

<sup>8</sup> Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. <sup>9</sup> 'I will give you all these' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says: *You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.*' <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

## **Gospel Focus**

In preparing to proclaim the Scriptures, it is important to remember that we serve the word, not the other way around. It can be easy to rationalize a Scripture created in our own image that we might be "like gods." We might find ourselves thinking that Scripture is great when it says things that we like (or when it condemns the "right people") but less so when it goes against our own desires and preconceptions. When we sue the Scriptures for our own purposes, we are doing the same thing Satan does in today's gospel. Satan is not ignorant of Scripture of this passage, but on the contrary appears to be quite biblically literate. What separates Jesus' response from Satan's is that Jesus refuses to give into the temptations of self-aggrandizement. Lent is a great time to grow

nearer to the word of God-not on our terms, but on God's. Jesus himself quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, saying. "One does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." If we approach the Scriptures in humility, God will reveal himself to us.

## **Gospel Reflection**

It is the subtle way that temptation resembles truth that gets us. For people who have made a fundamental choice to accept God's invitation to orient their lives toward the divine love, those things that are blatantly evil do not hold allure. They are easily recognizable as wrong, and it does not take much effort to reject them. The real temptations are the ones that are just close enough to the truth that they appear good and beneficial.

In the gospel reading from Matthew that we hear today, Jesus has just had a powerful experience at his baptism, of being filled with the Holy Spirit and knowing in a profound way that he is God's beloved Son (Matt 3: 17). It is this very sense of his identity that the tempter tries to undermine. First, the devil holds out this seductive image: surely the beloved Son is entitled to have all his hungers satisfied. Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus instead focuses on his hunger for the word of God. Throughout the gospel, we see him feeding God's hungry people with both physical and spiritual food (see Matt 5:1-7; 14:13-21; 15:32-39; 26:26-30).

Next is the temptation to believe that if Jesus is truly the beloved Son, God would never let any harm come to him. God's angels would swoop down and rescue him before any danger could befall him. Again turns to Scriptures, which enable which enable him to recognize the falsity in the claim of the tempter. A third time the devil tries to derail Jesus centeredness on God as the source of all power and the one deserving of worship. And, yet again, Jesus clings to the word of God to overcome the wiles of the tempter.

Finally the devil departs when Jesus commands, "Get away, Satan!" But not for long. The temptations circle back again and again, as variations on the same theme, throughout Jesus' life and ministry. Midway through the gospel, we again hear Jesus say, "Get behind me, Satan!" (16:23), when he is tempted by Peter to reject suffering as integral to his identity as beloved Son of God. Right to the end, as Jesus is dying on the cross, the devil's words are echoed by passersby: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" (27:40). The chief priests, scribes, and the elders chant the same: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, "I am the Son of God" (27:43).

Finally, the bandits who were crucified with Jesus taunt him the same way (27:44). Yet again on the cross, Jesus turns to the Scriptures and prayer to stay solidly grounded in his identity as God's beloved Son. The words of Psalm 22 sustain him through the challenges that try to undermine his expectations of how God would care for him. The final verse of today's gospel assures us that just as God's angels accompanied Jesus in his ordeals, so we are never abandoned in times of trial.

## **Old and New Testament links**

### **First Reading — Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7**

<sup>2:7</sup> The Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. <sup>9</sup> The Lord God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of

tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden.

<sup>3:1</sup> Now the serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?' <sup>2</sup> The woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. <sup>3</sup> But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "you must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death".' <sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! <sup>5</sup> God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.' <sup>6</sup> The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 51:1-4,10-12,15**

***R: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.***

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. In your compassion blot out my offence.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. **(R)**

My offences truly I know them; my sin is always before me  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned; what is evil in your sight I have done. **(R)**

A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **(R)**

Give me again the joy of your help; with a spirit of fervour sustain me,  
O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise. **(R)**

### **Second Reading — Romans 5:12-19**

<sup>12</sup> Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. <sup>13</sup> Sin existed in the world long before the Law was given. There was no law and so no one could be accused of the sin of 'law-breaking', <sup>14</sup> yet death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even though their sin, unlike that of Adam, was not a matter of breaking a law.

Adam prefigured the One to come, <sup>15</sup> but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man's fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift. <sup>16</sup> The results of the gift also outweigh the results of one man's sin: for after one single fall came judgement with a verdict of condemnation, now after many falls comes grace with its verdict of acquittal. <sup>17</sup> If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. <sup>18</sup> Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. <sup>19</sup> As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**2849.** Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony. (Cf. Mt 4:1-11; 26:36-44) In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is "custody of the heart," and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: "Keep them in your name." (Jn 17:11; Cf. Mk 13:9, 23, 33-37; 14:38; Lk 12:35-40) The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch. (Cf. 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6; 1 Pet 5:8) Finally, this petition takes on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake." (Rev 16:15)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. In what ways did Jesus' response to temptation differ from Adam and Eve's as seen in the first reading?
2. What can we learn about dealing with temptation from this passage?

### **Closing Prayer**

**Facilitator:** Loving God, although we face temptations, we know that you fulfil our every need. Hear our prayers we offer at the beginning of this season of Lent and guide us through our period of prayer, and fasting, and almsgiving. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen