

First Sunday of Lent. Readings Year A. Genesis 2:7-9,3:1-7, Romans 5:12-19 & Matthew 4:1-11
Theme: Jesus' victory over temptation and sin by the Tempter is a perfect model for us all

We began our Lenten season with the celebration of Ash Wednesday on Feb 18th. The word "Lent" is an ancient word for spring. Therefore, the season of Lent is a time in our personal lives for new life to appear and to let go of our old lifestyle. Lent, as we all know, is a 40-day liturgical season of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving in preparation for Easter. The Ceremonial of Bishops 249 explains it better: "The annual observance of Lent is the special season for the ascent to the holy mountain of Easter. Through its twofold theme of repentance and baptism, the season of Lent disposes both the catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery. Catechumens are led to the sacraments of initiation by means of the Rite of Election, the Scrutiny, and catechesis. The faithful, listening more intently to the word of God and devoting themselves to prayers, are prepared through a spirit of repentance to renew their baptismal promises."

On this first Sunday of Lent, our candidates for the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) will go to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston for the Rite of Election with our bishop, the Most Rev. Mark E. Brennan. God willing, they will be accepted into the church on the Easter vigil. Please keep them and their sponsors in your daily prayers. We thank God for them and also for their families and teachers.

On every First Sunday of Lent, the Church asks us to reflect on the Temptation of Jesus, since his victory over temptation and sin by the Tempter became a perfect model for us, his followers. The temptation of Jesus is recorded by all the Synoptic Gospel writers, namely Mark, Matthew, and Luke. They all tried to help us to understand the reality of temptation and sin as followers of Christ. The temptation of Jesus is about making a right choice, to obey his heavenly Father with regard to his mission here on earth or disobey him and follow Satan's mission. Jesus, also like Moses, Elijah and all the great prophets we admire, spent 40 days fasting and praying before starting the mission God gave him. He thought about his direction in life, his awareness of the Father, his uses of time, power, and personal gifts.

If you would recall last weekend's readings, we were reminded that God has blessed us with free will to obey him and have eternal life or disobey him and follow Satan who will lead us to hell. In today's readings, we are again reminded of this free will. Do you want to obey God and have eternal life or disobey him and obey Satan and all his empty promises, and end up in hell?

Mark gives a brief account of the temptation and no details like the accounts of Matthew and Luke. Since we're in Year A this year, we read about the temptation of Jesus according to St. Matthew. Matthew tells us after Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan, the Spirit led him to the desert to be tempted by the devil. Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights, when Satan tempted him three times regarding food, power, and wealth/glory. Satan knows human beings always want power, honor, and glory that belong to God alone. It is interesting to know that all the quotations of Satan were biblical. Be careful, knowing Scripture and not living it does not make one a Christian. Through fasting, prayer, and fidelity to the word of God, Jesus won victory over Satan. Through Jesus' temptation and victory, the Church reminds us also as his followers that we must be people of prayer, fasting, and faithful to God's word. Jesus becomes a perfect model for us all.

In the first reading, our first parents Adam and Eve failed the temptation of Satan due to their pride and envy to claim equality with God. St. Paul, in the second reading, makes a clear analogy between the Adam of Genesis, who wrote a history marked with the fall of humanity, and Jesus Christ, who gave us a new history marked with forgiveness of sin, love, and eternal life. Paul helps us to understand and appreciate the redemptive mystery of Christ.

During this Lenten Season, let us remember like Jesus Christ, we shall also go through temptations and trials. Jesus has given us a perfect model to follow. Also, it is very important for us to remember that Jesus' temptation did not end in the desert. Throughout his life, the Tempter/Satan tried him until Jesus gave his last breath on the Holy Cross when Jesus won his final victory over Satan. If you recall on the Cross, Satan entered into one of the criminals on the cross beside Jesus. He reviled Jesus saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." That is Satan talking in this man. I believe/think our Holy Mother Church knows well of Satan has advised us to pray the Hail Mary to ask Mother Mary to please "PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH." Fellow parishioners, our battle with our enemy, the devil, is not over until we also give up our last breath like Jesus did.

By the grace of God and the intercession of our Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, we will win victory over Satan and all his empty promises and meet Jesus and all our loved ones who have preceded us in death. Amen!