

# FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



## The Lord Alone

Faithful God,  
from the very beginning  
you have called your people  
to worship you  
with single-minded focus.  
You are the one true God,  
source of all goodness and mercy.  
Grant us the strength  
to resist earthly temptations,  
the will to turn from distractions,  
and the desire to orient our lives  
toward loving you first.  
We ask for your patience  
as we seek to grow in holiness  
this Lent  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 26, 2023

God First



*Today's readings: 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.* Jesus gets the last word when the devil tries to lure him with earthly temptations. He quotes the Shema from Deuteronomy, chapter 6: “Hear O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (6:4–5). This most fundamental expression of faith orients our spiritual focus for the season of Lent. It is a clear invitation from the Scriptures to turn our hearts toward God.

A simple pie chart of how the majority of our time is spent during any week will reveal the priorities around

which our lives are ordered and what or whom we worship. Do we seek the accumulation of possessions or power; do we worship celebrities or ideologies; do we serve egocentric goals or addictions? Lent offers us the opportunity for *metanoia*, the profound transformation of mind and heart. Now is the time to take a self-inventory and make deliberate choices that place God first in our heart and mind. These choices are expressed in the activities and gestures of our daily living. Sketch out your pie chart and take an honest look at it. Then write a love letter back to God, telling him your plan for how you intend to place God at the center of your life this Lent.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, February 27

#### Mercy Works

How shall we grow in holiness this Lent? We don't have to guess. Today's Scriptures lay out the blueprint. The instructions from Leviticus give clear direction for avoiding sin. Equally important, the Gospel passage from Matthew calls us to active engagement in the corporal works of mercy. We have six weeks before Easter. Pick one work of mercy to focus on each week of Lent; resolve to try the works of mercy you find most challenging first. *Today's readings: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Matthew 25:31–46.*

### Tuesday, February 28

#### Our Father

Each Lent we are invited to deepen our prayer life. In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us exactly how to do just that through giving us the words of the Lord's Prayer. How can we magnify our prayer life? A possible start could be by praying the Lord's Prayer more intentionally. Write or type the prayer line by line on a sheet of white paper. Cut into strips. Reflect on each line of the prayer. Make the practice part of your daily prayer routine this Lent. *Today's readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

### Wednesday, March 1

#### Create in Me A Clean Heart

Responsorial Psalm 51 is prayed repeatedly through the season of Lent because it expresses the humble stance we are called to assume: "A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn." Catholics celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation each Lent as an essential step of spiritual preparation for Easter. Seek reconciliation early in Lent as a way to turn over the soil of your heart and make room for the new seeds of faith to grow in the coming weeks. *Today's readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

### Thursday, March 2

#### Ask, Seek, Knock

Today's Scriptures are deeply reassuring. The psalmist glorifies God, "on the day I asked for help, you answered me." Jesus promises, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." What do you need to ask God for today? Write a letter to God and lay out all the burdens you carry. Ask for what you need with confidence in God's faithfulness. *Today's readings: Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; Matthew 7:7–12.*

### Friday, March 3

#### Time to Heal

Jesus reminds the disciples, and us, of how broken relationships harm the soul. Lent is the time for reconciliation with God and with the people in our lives. Do you have an estranged relationship? What steps can you take toward healing? For starters, name a relationship that seems to hold you in bondage. Ask God to guide you in seeking freedom from anger, judgment, frustration, and resentment. Attend to the ways God provides opportunities to take repairing steps in the coming days. *Today's readings: Ezekiel 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

### Saturday, March 4

#### Lifting Up a Relationship

The call to pay attention to difficult relationships in our lives continues in today's Scripture readings. Jesus tells us the first steps toward healing: pray for that person daily as part of your Lenten sacrifice. This can be challenging. Praying for those who cause us distress requires humility. Heed the advice of our Lord and take note of the movement of your heart as you do so in the coming weeks. *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*

