

# Sunday Message

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 26 February 2023 • Psalter Week 1



## STOPPAGE TIME

(MATTHEW 4:1-11)

Part of growing to maturity is figuring out who we are and what we want out of life. We seek meaning and happiness. We want to find ourselves. Some people achieve this while going through school and college. For others, it takes longer. A few even step away from their job or regular routine to go on a journey of discovery. They take time out to look at themselves and what they're about.

This is what Jesus does in today's Gospel. He has spent three decades living at home as a regular member of the community, probably engaged in the family carpentry business. But after being baptised in the Jordan, he feels the need to take a deeper look at himself. He steps away from what he has been doing to think and pray. He wants to get a sense of God's plan for him. So he goes out into the wilderness on a journey of discovery.

While there, he is tempted to seek wealth, glory, power. Satan is luring him in a particular direction, trying to get him to give into some of the strongest human temptations, but Jesus will not follow. He knows this is the wrong way to go.

At the end of the forty days, he is sure of what God wants of him. He knows the direction his life must take. You could say he has found himself and his mission.

That is what the season of Lent is about. It invites us to go on a journey of discovery, to take time to look at the shape our life is in and see what needs changing in order to be our best selves. ■

## REFLECT

In his book *Let us dream*, published in 2020, Pope Francis uses the word "stoppage" to describe the Covid-19 lockdown. He uses it to describe how so much of life as we knew it ground to a standstill, a complete halt. It was a traumatic experience for everyone, but Pope Francis says stoppage can also be good. It gives us time to think, reflect, assess our priorities, consider what is important and what is not.

Stoppage, Pope Francis says, offers a place of refuge against the tyranny of the urgent. We know what he means. Life can be so busy; everything can appear so urgent that we don't have the time or opportunity to step back a bit. The lockdown forced us to step back, to take a breather from the tyranny of the urgent. Lent is our annual opportunity to do the same. It's our stoppage time, our chance to step away from the demands of the urgent, to stop and think and pray and evaluate.

Look at your life. How good a Christian are you? Is there anything you need to change in order to draw closer to Jesus? ■

## LEARN

Lent coincides with spring. It reminds us how deeply the rhythms of life and death are embedded in our world. New life can only come into being because the old life has passed away. One of the great messages of Lent is that we can only find new life when we let go of the dead parts of ourselves that hold us back from growing. Just as a rose bush needs pruning to produce well-shaped roses, we need to allow ourselves to be pruned to become the kind of people God wants us to be.



## PRAY

Pray that this season will be a time of renewal for the entire Church. Pray, too, for catechumens who are preparing for baptism at Easter.

## DO

Lent is not so much about giving up as about discovery. Take time to look at your life. What do you need to discover or rediscover this Lent?

## SAY

Lord, during this Lenten season help me to turn towards you every day so that I may find new life in you.



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

When he calls on me, I will answer him;  
I will deliver him and give him glory,  
I will grant him length of days.

**COLLECT**

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,  
God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING** Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

A reading from the book of Genesis.  
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.  
The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. 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 knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden.

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?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. 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.'" Then the serpent said to the woman: "No! You will not die! 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." 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. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM** Psalm 50

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

1. 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.)
2. 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.)
3. 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.)
4. 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

(For shorter form read between > and < )  
A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

>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.< 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", 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, 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. 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. >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. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

The word of the Lord. <  
**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!  
Man does not live on bread alone  
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.  
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

**GOSPEL** Matthew 4:1-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves." But he replied, "Scripture says:

Man does not live on bread alone  
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "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."

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "I will give you all these," he said, "if you fall at my feet and worship me." Then Jesus replied, "Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God,  
and serve him alone."  
Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.  
The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**  
*(all bow during the next two lines)*  
**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
**Amen.****

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Give us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray,  
to make these offerings,  
for with them we celebrate the beginning  
of this venerable and sacred time.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Renewed now with heavenly bread,  
by which faith is nourished, hope increased,  
and charity strengthened,  
we pray, O Lord, that we may learn to hunger  
for Christ,  
the true and living Bread,  
and strive to live by every word  
which proceeds from your mouth.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**