

**Sunday, March 5, 2017**

**1st Sunday of Lent**

## **Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion**

### **Mass Readings:**

**1st Reading:** Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

**2nd Reading:** Romans 5:12-19

**Responsorial:** Psalm 51:3-6, 12-13, 17

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

## **Overcoming Temptation by Turning to the Lord**

*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1)*

Today's readings show us two opposite responses to the temptation to be "like gods" (Genesis 3:5). Our first parents gave in to the serpent's allure, but Jesus didn't. He did what we could not do. Facing every temptation that we face, he clung to his Father and remained free from sin.

Sin is appealing, isn't it? It's also incredibly deceptive, passing itself off as harmless and maybe even good for us. Imagine how the forbidden fruit must have appeared to Eve—"good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and . . . desirable for gaining wisdom" (Genesis 3:6). But that doesn't mean fighting temptation is a hopeless cause. This Lent is a time when our lives can change.

What temptations oppress you the most? A tendency toward irritation or resentment? Selfishness? Jealousy? Choose one, and decide to make some headway in just this one area this Lent.

Here's one of the best ways to do it: think about Jesus in the wilderness, battling hunger and the nagging voice of Satan. Each time he was tempted, Jesus turned to his Father in prayer, even when it was a great effort, even when the truths he clung to felt distant. And his Father didn't abandon him!

God never turns away from us either. He is always ready to help us. That's why Lent is such a vital time. It's our chance to change directions and cling to the Lord and his word. It's our chance to say no to the temptations we face and turn back to our heavenly Father.

When you do this, it will make a difference in your relationship with God. But it will also change the world. Think about the ripple effects of millions of people turning away from the snares of the devil and welcoming God more deeply into their lives! Come Easter, families will be stronger, and faith will be deeper.

***"Jesus, show me what is tempting me, and help me turn back to the Father."***

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**Questions for Reflection/Discussion:**

1. As we begin Lent the Church, in its first reading, takes us back to the origin of sin in the world, and the temptation we are still part of today to “be like gods” - or to say it another way, “to be our own God.”
  - How would you describe the temptation to be “like gods” from Genesis 3:5. Why is giving into this temptation such a major sin?
  - In what ways are there still areas in your life where you believe you really know what’s best and, thus, struggle to entrust these areas to God’s providential care?
2. In the responsorial psalm, David’s great prayer of repentance, he cries out: “Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always. Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.”
  - How does David’s cry represent what it means to make a “perfect act of contrition”?
3. David goes on to ask this request of God: “A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me.”
  - Why do you think David’s request was so important to him?
  - Where in your relationship with God and others could you use a “clean heart” and a “steadfast spirit”?
4. The second reading from the letter to the Romans begins with these words: “Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.”
  - How would you describe what it means to “receive the abundance of grace” and “the gift of justification”?
  - What steps can you take this Lent to receive more fully these wonderful gifts?
5. The second reading ends with these words: “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.”
  - What do these words mean to you?
6. In the Gospel, notice how Jesus uses the power of the Scriptures, “the word of God,” to defeat Satan’s temptations.
  - Why is Scripture such a powerful weapon against Satan’s lies and the temptations to sin?
  - During Lent, what commitment are you willing to make to increase your times of prayer and Scripture reading? Are you willing to be accountable to someone for this commitment? If not, why not?
7. The meditation reminds us that “This Lent is a time when our lives can change.” It then continues with these words: “What temptations oppress you the most? A tendency toward irritation or resentment? Selfishness? Jealousy? Choose one, and decide to make some headway in just this one area this Lent.”
  - During the upcoming weeks of Lent, what steps can you take to make a greater effort to turn to the Lord during times of temptation in order to ask for the power of his “Word” and the power of his Cross to overcome them?
8. Take some time to pray and ask the Lord to show you what tempts you the most during the day and for the grace and the strength to say no to the temptations. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

***“Jesus, show me what is tempting me, and help me turn back to the Father.”***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also

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a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of directors of the **Christlife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization** (<https://christlife.org/>). Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmus.org/>). He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org).]