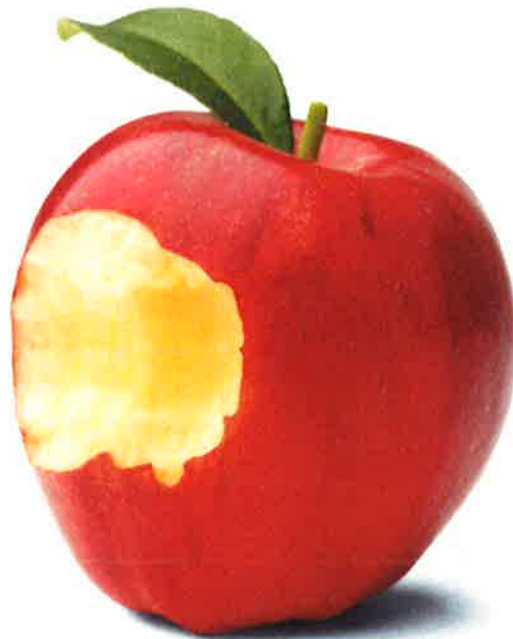


PROCLAIMING CHRIST

Meditations for the Season of Lent



“To be attracted by power, by grandeur, by appearances, is tragically human. It is a great temptation that tries to insinuate itself everywhere. But to give oneself to others, eliminating distances, dwelling in littleness and living the reality of one’s everyday life: this is exquisitely divine.”

— POPE FRANCIS, JULY 28, 2016

Temptations

Matthew 4:1-11

It’s no accident that the Gospel reading for the First Sunday of Lent tells the story of Jesus being tempted by the devil. Jesus was divine, but he was also human. The temptation to put personal comfort, power, and pride ahead of what God wants is a struggle every human being faces at some point in life.

Being tempted is not a sin, but temptations can lead to sin. So it is important to recognize when we are being tempted. Our response must be an immediate “No!” The longer we allow temptations to linger in our minds, the more difficult they are to reject.

As we become more experienced in resisting temptations, their intensity usually weakens. St. Paul tells us

FOR REFLECTION

- › What is one temptation you have experienced?
- › How did you overcome that temptation?
- › What have you learned about God and yourself by overcoming temptation?

that God allows us to be tempted, but God also offers us the grace we need to overcome temptations. “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor 10:13).



DID YOU KNOW?

- There are forty days in the season of Lent because Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness.
- The word “Lent” comes from an Anglo-Saxon word that means “lengthen,” a reference to the lengthening days as spring approaches.
- The first day of Lent is Ash Wednesday, one of the most popular days in the Church year.



Karen Callaway

“Bless Me, Father ...”

A great way to deal with temptations — and the times when we were not successful in overcoming temptations — is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Prepare for confession by examining your conscience, which simply means thinking back on your temptations and the sins you have committed. Most people start their confession by saying: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (the amount of time) since my last confession.”

If you can't remember the words or you don't recall how long it's been, don't worry. Just tell the priest it's been a long time, and he will guide you through the process. What you will experience is the healing gift of God's love, a clear conscience, and an overwhelming sense of gratitude!



Family Focus



St. Francis de Sales says, “A temptation disclosed is a temptation half-vanquished.” Talk to your kids about temptations. Let each family member mention a problem area that he or she would like to pray about in a special way. Talking about temptations helps to overcome them.

Catechism CONNECTION

“Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1808

Lenten Prayer

A traditional prayer to help us overcome temptations invokes the assistance of St. Michael the Archangel:

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do you, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who roam about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.



Why Do Catholics Fast?

In today's Gospel, Jesus fasts for forty days in the wilderness. Fasting has always been an important part of Lent. We abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and every Friday during Lent. Many people also give up chocolate, potato chips, ice cream, or anything else that is really loved but isn't all that great for us! When we resist the temptation to eat treats during Lent, we strengthen our will. But the real purpose of fasting is to create in ourselves a feeling of longing that helps us recognize our deep spiritual hunger for God. You might want to decide as a family what to give up for Lent. Maybe you could fast from television or video games. Maybe you could fast from gossip or saying unkind things. Maybe you could fast from complaining, or jealousy, or irritability. The possibilities are endless!

