

Missionary Commentary

First Sunday of Lent
March 9, 2025

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 26:4-10
Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15
Romans 10:8-13
Luke 4:1-113

From Selfishness to Generosity

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Lent, the forty-day period that begins on Ash Wednesday, ends with Easter; it is a God-given opportunity of grace! The Lenten Prefaces of the liturgy note: "This great season of grace is your gift to your family to renew us in spirit.... You ask us to express our thanks by self-denial. We are to master our sinfulness and conquer our pride. We are to show to those in need your goodness to ourselves." Truly, Lent offers us a *unique opportunity for renewal in our Christian life*.

Each year on the first Sunday of Lent the Gospel is always the same: a Synoptic account of Jesus' forty-day desert retreat and the temptations by the devil. These temptations reveal life's basic challenges; they can be captured in three words, all beginning with the letter "**P**."

First, Jesus has been fasting and praying for forty days; he is hungry, he wants food. The devil approaches with an enticing offer: just make bread from stones. This *first* temptation deals with **possessions**. We all want a variety of material goods. Let's face it: we are all materialistic in both large and small ways. Lent is an opportunity to examine ourselves and ask if "material attachments" control us.

Jesus' *second* temptation involves the devil taking him to a lofty mountain and displaying the entire world before him. This is a temptation to **power**. Jesus is tempted to gain power for selfish purposes. How do we use or abuse our power?

In the *third* temptation, the devil brings Jesus to a parapet of the temple, presenting a temptation to **prestige** or **pride**. Jesus will be well-known and famous, honored and recognized as someone special, if he jumps and the angels come to rescue him. How many of us are proud, wanting to be in first place and have worldly honors?

Note carefully: we **all** are subject to these temptations, wanting **possessions**, **power** and **prestige**. We **all** are selfish and proud. Thus, Lent is a grace-filled time to "master our sinfulness and conquer our pride." How can we achieve this?

The three traditional Lenten practices address each of the three temptations. When our desire for **possessions** is strong, we are to practice *almsgiving*, freely donating our material goods to the needy. When we want

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power and control, we must spend time in *prayer*, surrendering our lives to God's will, allowing Him to rule our lives. If the desire for **prestige** rules our lives, we will engage in *fasting* to conquer this form of selfishness.

Lent is this precious opportunity to journey with Jesus. This involves struggling (as Jesus did) with the forces of evil, the demons of **possessions, power, and prestige/pride**. A forty-day season of grace now begins. Don't lose one day! God is calling! Listen to his voice today! Move from selfishness to generosity!

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading — Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Today's reading is set in the Promised Land; the Israelite community has survived the Exodus journey. They experience a rich harvest; now they are to come with a harvest basket to the altar to thank God for his goodness. They are to celebrate a Feast of Thanksgiving.

Responsorial Psalm — Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15

This psalm expresses the numerous ways that God manifests his kindness and mercy toward us. God constantly watches over his people on their journey through life.

Second Reading — Romans 10:8-13

Here Paul describes God's overflowing goodness; his kindness is manifested through the life and redemptive work of Christ Jesus. The reading asserts that God is "rich in mercy." Recall that Pope John Paul II wrote (1980) an entire encyclical on mercy with the title *Dives in Misericordia* (*Rich in Mercy*).

Gospel — Luke 4:1-13

In today's Gospel Saint Luke describes the forty-day desert retreat by Jesus; it involves three temptations by the devil. The Lord answers each provocation with a quote from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. The entire Gospel narrative manifests Jesus' unwavering obedience to God his Father.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).

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