

**March 1, 2020**  
**First Sunday of Lent**

Jesus freely chose to do everything that he did. He freely chose to empty himself of every appearance of God when he was born as one of us, weak and vulnerable, in need of the care and protection of human parents. In his humanity, he grew in wisdom and grace throughout his childhood and through His adulthood, even though as God, He is the source of all wisdom and grace. Jesus chose to go to the desert to fast and to pray for 40 days to grow in His relationship with His Father before He began His three years of public ministry.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that as Jesus fasted for forty days, He became hungry. I always smile at that verse because as I think to myself, we do not need the word of God to tell us something as obvious as that. Once I get over myself, I realize that there is a deeper meaning in these words than what is on the surface. These simple words reveal to us Jesus free choice to become vulnerable, weak to experience hunger. His hunger was more than that of the stomach. His hunger was to experience the weakness of every human physical, spiritual and emotional need. We all know that when we are sad, mad, and hungry or tired, we are more vulnerable to temptations. Jesus freely chose to be vulnerable on the human level to show us the way to resist the temptations of devil.

Notice how tempts Jesus; he says, "If you are the Son of God". The temptation is to take, rather than receive, to take the relationship He has with the Father rather than to receive it as a gift from the Father. In a hidden and cunning way, he wants Jesus to do violence to His relationship with His Father and he attacks him through the weakness of hunger. The devil tempted Adam and Eve in the same way, to take of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil rather to wait to

receive it according to the perfect will of God. In both cases, the devil wants to rupture the perfect relationship that Adam and Eve once had with God and the eternal relationship Jesus has with his Father. Adam and Eve fell and Jesus did not. We live with the consequences of Original Sin, the sin for Adam and Eve, the brokenness of our lives and our world. We only need to read or listen to the news for a few minutes to encounter that rupture of our perfect relationship with God. Jesus entered fully into our human temptations. He resisted the temptation to break his relationship with his Father and with that power and confidence as the Son of God, he said, "Get away, Satan!" Jesus's words and actions have power for us. Jesus offers to us freedom from sin through the sacraments.

When we celebrate the Eucharist we begin with calling to mind our sins, and the priest prays, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and lead us to every lasting life. Again, at the Communion Rite, we sing, "Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, grant us your peace", Jesus says again, "Get away, Satan." The anointing of the sick is the healing presence of Christ for both body and soul and offers the forgiveness of sins. The Church strongly encourages us especially in the season of Lent to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. The celebration of this sacrament is a way for us to go with Jesus to the desert, to be vulnerable, to say our sins aloud to the priest, and through the ministry of the Church to hear the words of absolution, the forgiveness of Christ. I strongly encourage you to attend one of our Reconciliation Services, either Wednesday night at 7:00 pm or Thursday at 10:00 am.

We know from the Gospel readings from the last two Sundays that Jesus came not to do away with the law, but to fulfill it. Following Jesus is more than just obeying laws; it is about restoring our relationship to the Father. Come to Jesus. He alone can restore all that has been lost and broken by our sin.

