

THOU WHO
worship

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert,
and he remained in the desert for forty days,
tempted by Satan.
He was among wild beasts,
and the angels ministered to him.

MARK 1:12-13

FIRST
SUNDAY OF
LENT

FEBRUARY 21, 2021

Feast of Faith

Seasonal Changes for the Liturgies of Lent
Today is the First Sunday of Lent. During this season of preparation for Easter, our churches look stark and simple—no flowers at the altar, no festive banners or decorations. And our liturgies feel different, too. The organ is quiet except to accompany the singing of the assembly. The Gloria, our Sunday song of rejoicing, is not heard except on solemnities, and we will not sing the Alleluia, our joyful acclamation of praise, until the Easter Vigil. “Alleluia cannot always / Be our song while here below,” says an eleventh-century hymn. “Alleluia our transgressions / Make us for a while forego; / For the solemn time is coming / When our tears for sins must flow” (Alleluia dulce carmen, J. M. Neale, trans.). These changes in the liturgy will catch our attention, and make us eager for the festive outpouring of joy that will return with Easter. This year, may the stripped-away liturgies of Lent remind us to strip away what is not essential in our lives to make space for the crucified and risen One, and thus to be ready to sing “Alleluia” once again when Easter returns.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Beauty in forgiveness

Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else forgiving another.

—Jean P. F. Richter

The quality of change

To change and to change for the better are two different things.

—German proverb

Repent and believe in the Gospel

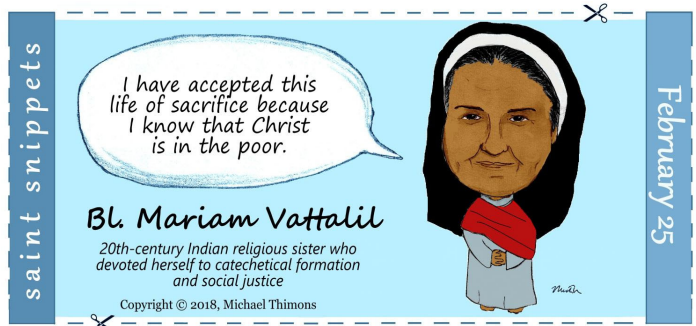
Lent is the time of year we devote to scrutinizing our lives in the light of our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today’s readings are a nice shorthand catechism of what our baptized lives mean. As Noah passed through the waters of the flood to a covenant with God, so did we enter into a covenant, a promised relationship with God through our baptism.

Peter’s letter gives an explicit explanation of what our baptism means: it is an appeal we make to God for a clear conscience. How do we obtain this clear conscience? The words proclaimed by Jesus immediately following his temptation show us the way: “Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). It might be a good spiritual exercise to keep these readings before us throughout the entire season of Lent, a means to help us return to a life lived by our baptismal promises.

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Readings for the Week

Monday:	1 Pt 5:1-4; Ps 23:1-3a, 4-6; Mt 16:13-19
Tuesday:	Is 55:10-11; Ps 34:4-7, 16-19; Mt 6:7-15
Wednesday:	Jon 3:1-10; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Lk 11:29-32
Thursday:	Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps 138:1-3, 7c-8; Mt 7:7-12
Friday:	Ez 18:21-28; Ps 130:1-8; Mt 5:20-26
Saturday:	Dt 26:16-19; Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Mt 5:43-48
Sunday:	Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ps 116:10, 15-19; Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10



Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	First Sunday of Lent; Rite of Election; Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion; Rite of Sending
Monday:	Washington’s Birthday; Julian Calendar Lent begins
Tuesday:	St. Polycarp
Thursday:	Purim (Jewish observance) begins at sunset
Friday:	Abstinence

Today’s Readings

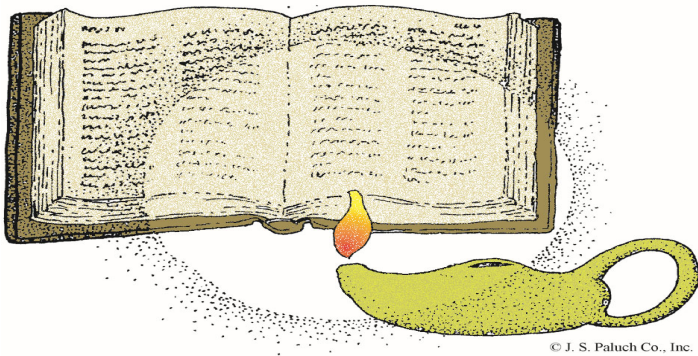
First Reading — I will set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth (Genesis 9:8-15).

Psalms — Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant (Psalm 25).

Second Reading — The water of the flood prefigured baptism, which saves you now (1 Peter 3:18-22).

Gospel — Jesus was tempted by Satan, and the angels ministered to him (Mark 1:12-15)

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First Sunday of Lent February 21, 2021

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;
Teach me your paths.

—Psalm 25:4

Treasures From Our Tradition

By the First Sunday of Lent, many people have given up on “giving up.” Yet experiencing hunger for favorite things is a sign of a desire to face our deepest hungers. We do not embrace fasting as individuals, but rather as the community’s way of life in this season. Sometimes it helps to see Sunday as an oasis in the Lenten desert, a place where fasting is not as strictly observed. If we count the days of the Lenten calendar, starting backward from the end of Lent on Holy Thursday, it is difficult to measure the forty days. Many are surprised to learn that the Sundays are counted as part of Lent, but are not counted in tallying the forty days of the Lenten fast. For that, we count the fast backward into last week, beginning on Ash Wednesday. So, until today we have been in the Lenten fast, days that function as a kind of overture to a symphony of conversion.

Today Lent solemnly begins, marked in many places by the sending of catechumens and candidates to the bishop for the call to the Easter sacraments. Tomorrow with them, we embrace the Lenten fast again. Today we are exactly forty days from the opening of the Paschal Triduum on Holy Thursday.

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