

Conversion of Heart

Lenten Reflections on Mercy and Forgiveness

Week 1

READINGS: *Deuteronomy 26:4–10; Romans 10:8–13; Luke 4:1–13*

Jesus offers us spiritual strength

In this week's Gospel reading, Jesus was "led by the Spirit" (Lk 4:1) into the desert for forty days. There, he was pestered by Satan so that he could experience "every temptation" (v. 13), a truly remarkable feat by any standard.

During this time, Jesus was made acutely aware of the difficulties we experience as humans who struggle with sin. More importantly, Jesus reveals that in the face of temptations we can draw upon his grace and strength, as he himself has endured such temptations. In debating the

prince of darkness, he helped us become fellow soldiers in the spiritual battle.

"You shall worship the Lord, your God, / and him alone shall you serve" (Lk 4:8).

As we begin our Lenten journey, let us call to mind our need to be "made aware." Jesus was made aware of how difficult it is to live a holy life. We, through our sacrifices of time, talent, and treasure, are led by the Spirit to our own spiritual deserts where we can experience God's grace of mercy in the

silence of our hearts.

There, and only there, can we truly become *aware* of our own spiritual strength.



Saint

Pray contemplatively

Thomas Aquinas was a quiet man who experienced a multitude of temptations. He was a master of contemplative prayer, which led him to overcome those temptations to a heroic degree. He lived a life of intense focus, studying and pondering God, and sharing his wisdom with others in deed, speech, and writing.

As you continue your Lenten journey, spend time in contemplative prayer each day. Ponder the things of God by reading Scripture and spiritual books, and meditating on God's will for your life.

For Reflection

- › Are you aware of God's mercy in your life?
- › What temptations do you struggle with?
- › How are you preparing to enter into your spiritual desert this Lent?





Faith Lesson

Tips for seeking FORGIVENESS

▶ DO YOU NEED FORGIVING?

If you are aware of something you have done to harm others, try taking these first steps:

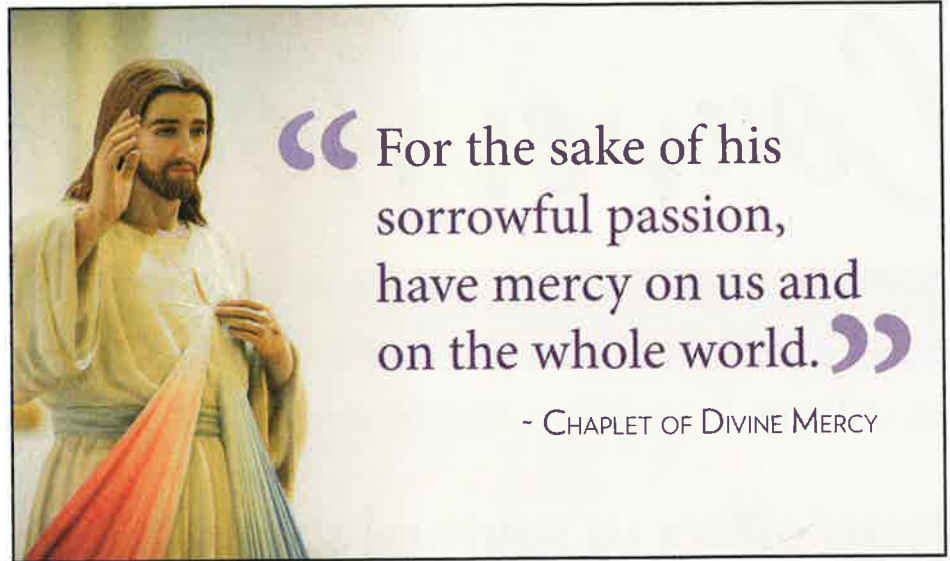
- Go to confession.
- Pray for the person you offended and ask for God to help bring peace between you both.
- Reach out to the person you offended and ask them for forgiveness.

▶ DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE?

- Pray for the person who offended you and for God to help bring peace between you both.
- Reach out to the person who offended you and forgive them.



Prayer



“For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

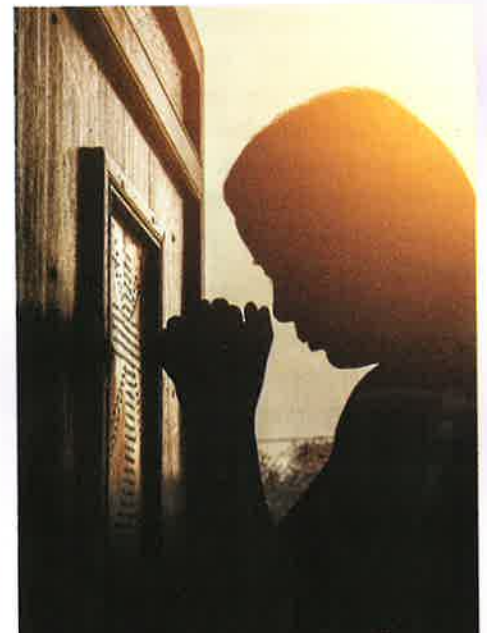
- CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY

WORD Meanings

The word “mercy” comes from the Latin *merces*, which means “reward.” Mercy is God’s undeserved gift for those who show mercy. Hence, in the Lord’s Prayer we say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” May we always remember that God offers mercy to all, but it can only be accepted by those who show mercy to others.

Fasting TIPS

Offer your fasting up for someone who needs spiritual strength. Archbishop Fulton Sheen called this type of suffering a “spiritual blood transfusion” that can enliven the soul of those for whom we suffer. Think about that person every time you are tempted to break your fast. Then, overcome it and know that your efforts are making a difference with the help of the Holy Spirit.



Catechism Chat

“God created us without us; but he did not will to save us without us. To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults” (1847).

Holy Father, I am not perfect, but you are. Help me to become more perfect like you through your gift of mercy. May I be made worthy of such a reward by showing that same mercy to those who offend me and asking for forgiveness of those whom I have offended.