

# Sacrifice of Praise

*First Sunday of Lent: Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7 / Romans 5:12-19 / Matthew 4:1-11*



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## Jesus Offers Us an Example for Resisting Temptation

In Scripture, forty symbolizes a time of waiting and preparing. Jesus' response to the desert temptations presents three excellent examples of how we can fight temptation in our lives. In today's Gospel (Mt 4:1-11), we witness the faith-strengthening power of fasting, Scripture, and prayer. In the desert, Jesus empties himself physically with a forty-day fast and in turn is strengthened spiritually. He retreats to be alone with his Father, nourished only by communion with his Father, in preparation for his upcoming mission. Jesus roots his ministry — in fact, his entire existence — in prayer.

Lent is our desert. It is our forty days of waiting and preparing and is much more than a test to see how long we can hold out from choco-

late. Lent is an opportunity to practice using the gifts of our faith to avoid the many temptations we face each day. The Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving offer a foundation upon which we can build a solid faith. We, too, are called to empty ourselves physically through fasting to make room to be nourished by the loving, merciful presence of God in our lives. We also are being prepared for a mission. Strengthened by this Lenten

season, we are to go forth and share the Good News.

After forty days and nights of fasting, Jesus is hungry, but not just for food. Remember, the Spirit has led him into a period of preparation for ministry. Jesus will begin preaching in Galilee upon returning from the desert. He emerges hungry to share his message of love and mercy, the Good News of redemption and salvation.

Jesus' weapon against the lies and snares of the devil?

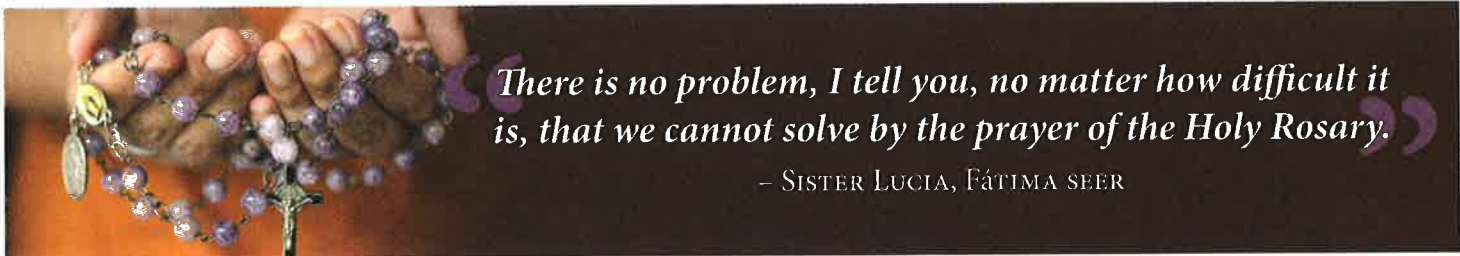
### FOR REFLECTION

- Jesus retreated from the busyness of his daily life for prayer. Are you able to find time during this Lent to fast from some of your activities to give God your undivided attention?
- Do you include solitude, fasting, and Scripture in your prayer time?
- How can prayer help you with the temptations you most often succumb to?

The Word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword (see Heb 4:12). The exchange between Jesus and the devil illustrates not only strength the faithful can draw from for spiritual battle in the Word, but also the great importance of understanding the meaning of each Scripture.

The Prince of Lies twists Scripture for his own advantage, but Jesus, empowered through fasting and prayer, sees clearly through each temptation and orders Satan away. He emerges from the experience ready to begin spreading the Good News.

Where will the next forty days bring you? Will you, too, at the end of your period of waiting and preparation be strengthened by prayer, fasting, and the Scriptures, to avoid temptation?



*There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot solve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.*

— SISTER LUCIA, FÁTIMA SEER

## Don't Know How to Pray?

Prayer can be an intimidating word. Some people worry they don't pray enough; others feel they aren't saying their prayers correctly. The bad news: You probably are not praying enough. But this problem is easier to solve than you think. We can pray while commuting to work or school, folding the laundry, even during our recreation. St. Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17), meaning, throughout the day, all day. The good news: The only wrong way to pray is not to pray at all. Prayer can be formal or informal, it should flow from your heart.

St. John Damascene wrote, "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2559). There is a Catholic tradition to help us remember the four types of prayers we can offer to God, through the acronym ACTS.

<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>S</b>
Adoration	Contrition	Thanksgiving	Supplication

We'll be looking at each one of these prayer offerings throughout the coming weeks of Lent.



### Prayer

Lord Jesus, to prepare for your mission as Savior, you first retreated to fast and pray. Tempted by the devil, you did not fall for his distortion of the Word. Instead, you allowed the truth of the Word to cut through the lies and warded off all temptation. May I follow your remarkable example to be strengthened in faith through prayer, fasting, and the Scriptures throughout this Lent and for the rest of my life.



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### Never Too Busy to Pray

St. Francis de Sales believed that every person has a call to holiness. He gave spiritual direction to many lay men and women through letters. His preaching, teaching, and priestly duties kept him incredibly busy. St. Francis, however, knew that, regardless of how busy he became, prayer needed to be at the center of his life. He taught, "Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer a day, except when we are busy — then we need an hour."

### CATECHISM CONNECTION



"Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2562