

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Protect us, our God,
from all evil
that would attract us
away from your love.
May we be loyal to you
and worship you
above all things
which you have made.
We ask you to do this,
through Christ, our Lord.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Both of our readings focus on the relationship between human beings and God—the created and the creator. While we cannot know the origins of the human choice to turn away from God, the first reading presents for us in vivid imagery the reality that something has gone wrong in this relationship, and it was humankind, not God, who caused the separation. In this story, God has provided human beings with all they need. But they wanted one thing more—to end the difference between creature and creator, to become gods themselves, to deny the uniqueness of God as God. In the end, they succumbed to this temptation.

In the Gospel for today, Jesus is also tempted by Satan. With appealing rewards, he is tempted to live a life of power and self sufficiency and to acknowledge Satan as a god. But Jesus refuses the temptation and three times proclaims that God and God alone is the Savior. Only God gives real life, real power, real security.

FIRST READING: *Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7*

This is a reading from the book of Genesis.

God created the first human beings
out of clay from the ground,
and breathed into them the breath of life,
and they became living people.
And God planted a garden in the east
in a place called Eden,
and God put the first human beings there.
God put many wonderful fruit trees in the garden,
and it was beautiful.
In the middle of the garden, God put the tree of life.
It was a tree that taught what is good and evil.
Now the serpent was the sneakiest
of all the wild creatures that God had made.
And the serpent said to the woman,

“Did God tell you
not to eat the fruit of the trees here in the garden?”

The woman answered,

“We may eat the fruit of all the trees
except the tree in the middle of the garden.
God told us,

‘You may not eat the fruit of the tree
in the middle of the garden.
You may not even touch it, or you will die.’”

But the serpent said to the woman,

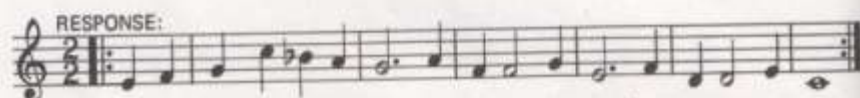
“No, you won’t die.
God knows that if you eat from that tree,
you will be like gods.

Then you will know what is good and what is evil.”

So when the woman saw how beautiful the tree was
and how good the fruit looked,
and that it could give her knowledge,
she took some of the fruit and ate it.
And she gave some to her husband, and he ate it, too.
Then they realized that they were naked.
So they made themselves clothes out of fig leaves.

The Word of the Lord.

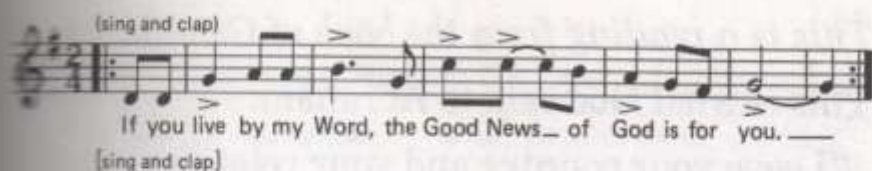
RESPONSE: *Psalms 51*



VERSES:

1. I know ___ that I have sinned and done what is wrong.
2. O God ___ for-give my sins and make my heart true.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



After Gospel, repeat Acclamation

GOSPEL: *Matthew 4:1-11*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River,
the Spirit led him into the desert.

Jesus stayed in the desert for forty days and forty nights.
During all that time,

he did not eat, and so he was hungry.

Then the devil came to him and said,

"If you are the Son of God,
tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

But Jesus said,

"It is written in the books of Moses,
'People do not live only by eating bread.
They also live by every word that comes from God.'"

Then the devil took Jesus to the very top
of the temple in Jerusalem and said to him,

"If you are the Son of God, jump down from here,
because it is written in the book of Psalms,

'God will tell the angels to take care of you.
And they will catch you
so that you will not hurt your foot on a rock.'"

But Jesus said,

"It is also written,
'You shall not test your God.'"

Then the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain
and showed him all the kingdoms of the world.

The devil said to Jesus,

"You can have all these kingdoms.
I will give them all to you if you will worship me."

Jesus said,

"Leave me alone, Satan!
It is written in the books of Moses,

'You must worship only God
and serve no one else.'"

Then the devil left him,
and the angels came and took care of Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

While reflecting on these readings with the children, we will want to keep two things in mind. First, the security that is found in God often seems abstract and even unrelated to our daily needs. Second, temptations are real, and most of us are faced with them throughout our lives. Our discussions with the children should not minimize these facts.

The point of the two readings is not that God provides all we need, or that we are not responsible for our lives. It is clear to the children that money and power do buy the things we need in order to live, such as, food, shelter, clothes, entertainment. Our emphasis should not be that these things have no value. Jesus said we do not live by bread *alone*. We should never pit God against the necessities of the world as though they are evil. After giving the children time to share their reflections, help them understand these:

- *All things ultimately come from God.* For example, one can work and acquire a home, food, clothes, and enjoy good health—all are gifts of God.
- *It is the exaggeration of the importance of possessions and dependence on personal money and power that Jesus warns against.*
- *We are sometimes tempted to want more than we need and to care more about what we have than about others. Jesus was also tempted. But like Jesus, we have the Spirit of God to help us to do what is right.*

During Lent, God asks us to think about the times we are tempted and to try to do what Jesus did—not give in to the temptations. Help the children reflect on temptations which may be problems for them at *their* age and in *their* circumstances. Jesus said to Satan, "Leave me alone!" We can do that, too.

