

## Cycle A – First Sunday of Lent – Feb. 26, 2023

*“He was famished ...”*

### OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 51)

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;

**All: according to your abundant mercy,  
blot out my transgressions.**

Leader: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.

**All: Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

Amen



### First Reading – Genesis 2:7-9, 16-18, 25; 3:1-7

The evolution-creation debate rests on the false premise that the Bible is a book of science. Instead, the Bible witnesses to creation's relationship with God as the Creator, and today's scripture passage attempts to answer the question why we human beings are the way we are. The message of Genesis is that the natural world was created for our benefit, and we were created in God's image and likeness. However, something inside us makes us move away from listening to – and trusting – God. Instead we allow ourselves to be seduced and tricked by illusions and lies. Through our own sinful actions, we locked ourselves out of the paradise which God intended for us.

1. How have you traditionally understood this passage and how does it speak to you today?
2. What are the signs of hope in this passage?

### Second Reading – Romans 5:12-19

Steeped in his Jewish theological and philosophical tradition, Paul articulates clearly the reality of the human condition: we sin and die, and cannot justify ourselves by our own efforts. New life in Christ Jesus, who is our Saviour, is a free and unearned gift from our gracious and merciful God. By comparing and contrasting Adam and Christ, Paul places the saving role of Jesus squarely in the long tradition of the Jewish faith.

1. How does this reading speak to you today?
2. How would you explain the role of Jesus to someone outside of Christianity?

## **Gospel – Matthew 4:1-11**

Both Luke and Matthew write a detailed account of Jesus being tempted in the desert right after the “high point” of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan. It is not accidental that each temptation occurs in a special place: the desert, the temple, and the mountain. The Bible tells us that each of these places pulsates with the possibility of encountering God there. One by one, Jesus needs to make clear choices as to what kind of Messiah God intends him to be. This passage also has both Satan and Jesus quoting Scripture, thereby illustrating that knowing Scripture is not enough – it must be properly interpreted and lived out.

1. What temptations in your life most challenge your faith commitment to Jesus?
2. Have you ever faced temptations in the process of clarifying your God-given mission?
3. Who or what helps you to be true to your faith and to Jesus Christ our saviour?

### **LIVING THE WORD**

What is God’s challenge for me this coming week?

### **PRAYING THE WORD**

**Intercession:** We pray for those who are victims of worldly temptations like the sex trade, cheap labour practices, and unjust distribution of resources. We pray to the Lord.

*Invite other intentions, then end with “Our Father ...”*)

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Leader: O God, Lord of the universe,  
you created us with a place deep inside of us,  
where we know what is right.

**All: We struggle in that place  
between integrity and temptation.**

Leader: Help us to hold fast to you, the God of life,  
and to resist defying, ignoring and testing you.

**All: You alone, Creator of all life,  
are worthy of our worship and service.  
Amen.**

Leader: Let us share with one another the sign of Christ’s peace.