

# FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



## Guide us, Lord

Lord,  
you brought salvation to Noah through  
the waters  
and carried him through his time of trial  
to a covenant of love.  
All times and all seasons belong to you.  
As we now begin this time, this season,

our time of trial,  
stay close to us.  
Carry us through our temptations.  
Remove all that keeps us apart from you.  
Lead us by the right paths  
so that we may live in the light of your love.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Forty Days



*Today's readings: Genesis 9:8–15; Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; 1 Peter 3:18–22; Mark 1:12–15.* After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Spirit drove him out into the desert, where he experienced temptation. Sometimes we fail to consider that, in the incarnation, Jesus took on every bit of the human experience, except sin. He knew what it was to be tempted, to face trials.

In the Bible, the number *forty* symbolizes a time of trial or testing. In today's readings, Jesus' forty days in the desert are placed alongside the experience of Noah and his family, the forty days of the flood. Neither reading leaves us in a time of trial. In the reading from Genesis, we see the rainbow, the sign of God's covenant with Noah. In Mark, we

hear Jesus proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand, the time for which they have been awaiting has come. At the very beginning of our season of preparation, we hear proclaimed the fruits that await us at its conclusion.

In this season of Lent, we have forty days to confront our temptations. We hear Jesus calling us to repent and believe in the Gospel. How might we use these forty days to ready ourselves to hear the proclamation at its end? What must I repent of so that I may better believe? This week, think about obstacles that hold you back from God's love. Consider your temptations. How can you use this season to make yourself ready for what is to come?



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, February 22

#### Feast of the Chair of St. Peter

The people who surrounded Jesus often wondered about his identity. He healed the sick, forgave sins, preached the coming of the kingdom of God. Walking alongside him, seeing all that he did, Peter must have wondered about this question too. When Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answers readily: Jesus is the Messiah, the one for whom all Israel has been waiting. Jesus founds the Church on Peter’s proclamation. What is your response to the query “Who do you say that Jesus is?” *Today’s readings: 1 Peter 5:1–4; Psalm 23:1–3a, 4, 5, 6; Matthew 16:13–19.*

### Tuesday, February 23

#### The Lord’s Prayer

When we step back to consider the prayer that Jesus taught and we memorized long ago, the challenge of the Lord’s Prayer is seen in a new way. In saying “thy kingdom come,” we long for God’s kingdom of justice and righteousness. But are we anxious to do God’s will, so that it is done on earth as it is in heaven? Do we forgive, even as we long to be forgiven? Take some time to meditate over each line of the prayer, perhaps writing each line and journaling with it. What might God be calling you to, as you reflect on the prayer that Jesus taught? *Today’s readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

### Wednesday, February 24

#### Turn Away from Sin

After his sojourn in the belly of the fish, Jonah traveled to Nineveh as God commanded. Upon hearing Jonah call them to repentance, the Ninevites changed their lives. It is tempting to seek big signs, but the call to conversion is daily. How can you reorient your life toward God today? How can you turn away from those things that are holding you back from his love? *Today’s readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

### Thursday, February 25

#### Ask, Seek, Knock

In today’s Gospel we are told to ask, to seek, to knock. Does this mean that God will give us our every desire? From both reason and experience, we know that sometimes we want things that are not good for us. Yet we are called to bring our needs and desires before God, who desires every good thing for us. What need can you entrust to God? How might giving it over to God transform its role in your life? *Today’s readings: Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; Matthew 7:7–12.*

### Friday, February 26

#### Go First and Be Reconciled

Jesus’ words about anger are challenging. Anger can come upon us easily, and sometimes we allow that emotion to govern our actions. But Jesus teaches another way. He says that before we bring our gift to the altar, we must go and be reconciled with the one we have wronged. How hard it is to admit we have made a mistake! Apologize to someone you have hurt and seek out the sacrament of reconciliation this week. *Today’s readings: Ezra 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

### Saturday, February 27

#### Love Your Enemies

Jesus’ instructions to love our enemies and pray for persecutors are familiar, yet somehow these instructions never fail to cause discomfort. Love our enemies? Pray for those who persecute us? Our natural inclination is to hurt those who have hurt us, to return actions in kind. Jesus holds us to a standard that seems impossible. This week, consider a person who has hurt you. Say one Hail Mary for that person and then another. As Mother Teresa said, prayer changes me and I change things. See what happens when you entrust that person to God. *Today’s readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*

