

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



In His Mercy

Loving Father,
you sent a rainbow
as a sign of your mercy
and of our relationship with you.
Soften our hardened hearts.
May the mercy that we show others

be a sign that through the waters of baptism
you live in us and that we are your
adopted children.
May our Lenten prayer and sacrifice
fortify us to continue your mission on earth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 18, 2024

Abundant Mercy



Today's readings: Genesis 9:8–15; Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; 1 Peter 3:18–22; Mark 1:12–15. “See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every little creature.” With these words, God shows his love as he promises anew to be in relationship with creation. In the reading from the First Letter of Peter, we hear that God saved the eight who were aboard the ark through the waters of the flood and now saves us through the waters of baptism. God, whose love brought us into being, seeks relationship and communion with us. To reconcile us with him, he sent his Son, who prepared for his mission by fasting for forty days in the desert.

During the forty days of Lent, many of us give in to temptation and find ourselves repenting time and again. Knowing that God is merciful and understands our shortcomings, we can always resolve to begin anew. God yearns for relationship with us and does not give up on us.

As one of your Lenten practices, you may have chosen to read the day's Scriptures attentively. Try to approach the readings with fresh eyes willing to allow the text to relate to your life today. Familiar texts can speak to us in the new circumstances, challenges, joys, and sorrows of our lives. All we need is an openness to the Word. God's Word is always relevant.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 19 The Neighbor

In Matthew 22:36–39, Jesus tells the scholar about the two greatest commandments: loving God and loving neighbor. Today's passage from Matthew depicts how our actions show love for both God and neighbor. Inviting the sheep on his right to the kingdom, the Son of Man recounts that their feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and welcoming the stranger also fed, clothed, and welcomed Christ. When a reminder is needed on how God expects us to treat our neighbor, return to this passage. *Today's readings: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Psalm 19:8–10, 15; Matthew 25:31–46.*

Tuesday, February 20 Patiently Waiting

Both the psalm and Gospel show us how to pray. Portraying the need for trust, the psalmist sings, "I sought the LORD and he answered me, / delivered me from all my fears." In the Gospel, Jesus tells his followers that they need to come to God with humility as they pray that his will be done. Instead of expecting instant gratification from prayer requests, keep in mind that God acts in his time, not ours. Be patient and trust; God will not leave you alone. *Today's readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–7, 16–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

Wednesday, February 21 Grateful Hearts

Jesus comments in today's Gospel on the generation's desire for a sign. How many times have you prayed and asked for a sign? Many of us want proof that God will come through for us. Remember that God knows what is best for each of us. During this Lent, seek to discern and appreciate what you have been given and thank God for what he has provided. *Today's readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

Thursday, February 22 The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle

Upon Peter's assertion that Jesus is the Messiah, we hear Jesus tell Peter that he is the rock upon which the Church shall be built. As Christ's followers, we too must voice that Jesus is our Savior. Our faith can be the foundation upon which others' faith can grow. Pope Francis implores us to go out in mission so that through encounters with others, the Church will grow. Our faith is not a secret but a wonderful gift. This Lent, how will you contribute to strengthening the foundation of the Church? *Today's readings: 1 Peter 5:1–4; Psalm 23:1–3a, 4–6; Matthew 16:13–19.*

Friday, February 23 Continuing the Mission

On the optional Memorial of St. Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr, the Church recalls a second-generation Christian who was a disciple of the apostle John. Before St. Polycarp was burned at the stake, he put his trust in God. He was unafraid of what would happen to him. Pray to be able to trust that God is with you, no matter the trial you face. *Today's readings: Ezekiel 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

Saturday, February 24 Learning to Love

"If you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?" we hear in today's Gospel. To love without conditions can be difficult. Yet this is what Jesus asks from us. When we have been wronged, it is tempting to seek revenge. Yet, Jesus shows us a higher path. Instead of revenge, Jesus loves everyone and instructs us to forgive. What would it mean for you to love your enemy and to forgive someone who has hurt you? *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*

