

CELEBRATE SABBATH

First Sunday of Lent

**Serenity is defined as the state of being calm,
peaceful, and untroubled.**

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

In this excerpt, we meet man and woman living in a land of abundance in total communion with God, with themselves and nature. In the midst of such abundance of grace, they faced testing times and failed to be true to what God made them to be and lost their sense of God and of themselves as God's special creatures made in His image.

Psalm 51

This psalm is often prayed by individuals and communities seeking forgiveness and mercy, flowing out from the steadfast love of God. The Old Testament period considered two sins, murder and rape/incest as sins that could not be atoned – murder lead to the death of the body and rape/incest to the death of the soul. Nathan confronted David with these two sins which he had committed (2 Sam. 11-12).

This great man, chosen by God to be king, had done something that could not be atoned. David threw himself at the mercy of God. This psalm reveals the heart of David as he realized what he had done. David appealed to God's steadfast, unfailing, covenant Love because he knew God would never break His covenant, even when man breaks it. His confession and prayer for mercy has now become part of our liturgy.

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
In your abundant compassion, blot out my offense.
Wash away all my guilt;
From my sin, cleanse me.

Romans 5:12-19

Paul reflects on sin and its effects on the person and the community. He further reflects on the abundance of Grace. The grace of God and the gracious gift of Jesus overflow for all people. Sin has come through disobedience. Grace has overflowed through the obedience of Jesus.

Reflect on how personal sin affects others in community. Reflect further on the power of Grace to transform your life.

Matthew 4:1-11

Mathew describes Jesus going through testing times while he was in intense personal communion with his father in the desert. In the first temptation, Jesus refuses to use his power for personal need satisfaction - for personal comfort, benefit or pleasure. In the second temptation, Jesus refuses to compromise/negotiate with evil forces - with lesser goals, values, morals, etc. Jesus chooses to surrender to the will of his Father. In the third temptation, Jesus refuses a "show-off", a display of power. Jesus chooses the way of trusting, confident Love.

Reflect on testing times (temptations) in your own personal life, even in times of intense search for God and God's ways.

Try the following during the first week of Lent:

- Eat light. Cut back on quantity.
- Change the TV Channel. Turn to something inspirational/educational.
- Skip TV one full day? Half Day? All evening? One day a week? On Sundays?
- Read the Bible. Or Read a good book.
- Pray alone. Pray as a family. Pray in Silence.
- Do a good deed today that no one will know about.
- Keep a "Jar of Alms" and throw in your loose change and share with the needy.
- Pray Psalm 51 and reflect over its meaning for you

Saint of the Day, February 22 - The Chair of St. Peter, the Apostle and 21 other saints are remembered this day.

In ancient Rome, this day was observed as "Ancestors' Day". People remembered the dead, especially their parents. The Christians of Rome began to celebrate this day in memory of Peter, their founding father and their first Bishop and so their true ancestor.

Why is today's feast called the "chair of St. Peter"? Every Bishop has a chair from which he presides, preaches and teaches officially. In Rome, in the Basilica of St. Peter, an ancient wooden chair is preserved, which is believed to be that of St. Peter. Today's feast honors this "chair", this seat, this office...which means, it honors this unity of teaching and preaching authority.....it honors the unity of the universal Church. The chair is the symbol of Peter's role and that of the popes as pastors of the whole Church. It is therefore a celebration of unity and a celebration of trust in the teaching authority of the Church. Let us pray for harmony and unity in the Church.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

