

1st Sunday of Lent (A)
February 22, 2026
“Daily Prayer”

Lent is a season of renewal and reconciliation as we prepare for the celebration of Easter. It is an anointed season if we cooperate with God’s grace. If we do not cooperate, these weeks will pass with little change in our hearts or lives. The choice is ours.

One way of looking at Lent is to ask ourselves: how can Lent help me in my relationship with God, with Christ, and with the Church?

First, **God**. God is the reason for Lent. He is the ultimate goal of Lenten observance. Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis knowingly disobeyed God and lost His friendship. Kicked out of Paradise, they wandered and struggled through life. But God did not abandon them because He is not a cosmic watch maker who started the world and left it to its devices. He is instead a heavenly Father who loves us to the end.

God wants sinners to repent and return to Him with all their hearts. The reason we pray more, eat less, and give alms is to heal and strengthen our relationship with God. To grow in holiness, one goal of Lent, is to become more like the God who created us. We need to know the goal if Lent is to mean anything.

God sent a Savior, Jesus Christ, to bring us back to Himself. **Christ** is the second reason for Lent.

We read in the Gospel of the triple temptations of Jesus in the desert: temptations (1) to EAT loaves of bread, (2) to SHOW OFF divine power, and (3) to WORSHIP the devil. Each time Our Lord rejects the devil’s tempting offer, and shows us how it is done.

The devil always uses something good, beautiful, and attractive to tempt us. By imitating Jesus, we learn how to avoid the triple temptations coming our way.

This brings us to the Church, our third Lenten relationship. The **Church** is the Mystical Body of Christ. Together we celebrated the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. The Church gives us so many gifts this Lent: it gives us beautiful spaces to pray and worship; it gives us clear teachings through the pope and bishops; it

gives us minimal rules (fasting and abstinence from meat) to resist sin and grow in grace; and it gives us, in the sacraments of Eucharist and Confession, the means to become holy and pure.

One specific action the Church encourages in Lent is **daily prayer**. We need to pray with and for one another. You don't become a great *athlete* by training only when you feel like it; you don't become a great *writer* only when you feel inspired to write; you don't become a great *musician* by playing only when you are "in the mood"; and you don't become a *saint* by praying only when the mood strikes you.

Prayer has been called "a surge of the heart, a simple look turned toward heaven, a cry of recognition and love, embracing both trial and joy." It is a loving dialogue with God through Christ in the Church.

"Growing in character and virtue, learning to hear the voice of God in our lives, and walking where he calls us" require the discipline of prayer (Kelly, *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*, 40).

There are great reasons to pray daily. *First*, we pray daily to make sense of life. Life is complex, confusing, and chaotic at times. Things don't seem to go our way, and other people are often more of a hindrance than a help. But God works through the complexities of life, and his hand there for us, guiding us to clear understanding of the chaos around us.

Daily prayer *also* helps us live deeply, devoutly, and deliberately. Life is a precious gift, and God wants us to live abundantly. Henry David Thoreau once wrote: "I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to put to rout all that is not life, and not when I had come to die discover that I had not lived." That's also why we pray.

Finally, daily prayer helps us build inner strength to face the challenges of life. This inner strength is needed to resist cultural pressures to abandon our values, our true selves, and God, as one writer put it (Kelly, 42).

Lent is here. We are here. This holy season is an anointed time to return to the **God** who made us, to grow closer to **Christ** who redeemed us, and to be with each other in a **Church** that needs us.

Mary, Mother of Reconciliation, pray that this Lent will be a time of growth and grace for each of us. God bless you.