Suggested Opening Song: From Ashes to the Living Font, #185

During the forty-day journey through the desert that we make each Lent, again and again we will find ourselves tempted to do the wrong thing, to overindulge, to lie, to take the easy way out. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit accompanies us to guide us along the right path and lead us back after we lose our way. We recall that filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus was able to resist temptation on his journey, even when the devil offered him the whole world. May we be strengthened regularly by his Body and Blood while on our holy pilgrimage.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith p. 144
I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (*bow as we say*) ***and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*** **For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Introductory Rite:
Greeting:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite: p. 12
Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:
Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word:
First Reading p. 116

A reading from the Book of Genesis *Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7*

The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"
The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'"
But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil."

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Responsorial Psalm *Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17*
R/. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.
R/. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.
Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. **R/.**

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight." **R/.**

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. **R/.**

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. **R/.**

Second Reading
A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans *Romans 5:12-19*

Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned - for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come.

But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many. And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel *Matthew 4:1-11*
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew **Glory to you, O Lord**

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: *One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: *The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.*" Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection on the Word:

- An obvious contrast is made between Adam and Eve's yielding to temptation in the first reading and Jesus' resistance of temptation in the Gospel. But another contrast can be noted: the first reading is set in a garden of plenty while the Gospel is set in a desert. Adam and Eve succumb to temptation even though they already have everything they need. In fact, they had everything they had ever wanted before the serpent put ideas in Eve's head. Jesus, meanwhile, had fasted for forty days and forty nights—recalling lengthy times of trial in the Old Testament—and is surrounded by emptiness. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve act selfishly and disobey God, bringing sin and death to humanity. Jesus, meanwhile, acts selflessly and obeys God's will, which will eventually bring redemption and eternal life to humanity.

- The devil's final temptation promises Jesus all the kingdoms in the world. Had Jesus taken the offer, he would have soon found out that he wasn't getting what was promised at all. Would Jesus have emerged from the desert as king of every nation with every army sworn to obey him and every person subject to him? Obviously not! The fact is, this was an empty promise, designed to gain Jesus' fealty. Note that with none of these temptations is the devil actually promising to do anything. He doesn't promise to turn stones to bread or catch Jesus from the parapet himself. When we renew our baptismal promises at Easter, we renounce Satan's empty promises, his "empty show," for—configured to Christ in baptism—we recognize that the devil's promises are hollow.

- Even if Jesus had turned stones to bread, he would have grown hungry again. The bread of this world satisfies for only a few hours. At the Last Supper, Jesus turns bread into his Body, providing spiritual food that can satisfy forever. The devil's second temptation is echoed on Good Friday, when passersby tempt Jesus to

throw himself down from the cross. Instead of prostrating himself to the devil in the desert, Jesus kneels in Gethsemane and affirms that he will follow God's will to the end. Jesus not only refuses the devil's temptations now, he turns them all around in the end.

Question of the Week
How do I resist temptation? Can I remember to look ahead to the long-term consequences before I choose what to do?

Prayer of the Faithful:
We lift up our needs to the Lord, praying that angels of mercy may minister to us as they ministered to Jesus in the desert.

- For the Church, that these forty days may strengthen what is weak in us and equip us to resist what tempts us, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For world leaders, that they may prioritize the welfare of the people of their nation and so avoid temptations of personal power and glory, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those afflicted by the storms of winter, that God may keep them and their loved ones safe during extreme cold, ice, and snow, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those preparing for the sacraments of initiation this Easter, that their faith may be deepened during their Lenten journey, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For all of us when we succumb to temptation, that we may always find our way back through God's infinite mercy, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, have mercy on us in your goodness and create in us clean hearts and steadfast spirits. Grant this and all our prayers, sending your angels of mercy to minister to us, through your Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p. 180
Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:
The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:
Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:
Renewed now with heavenly bread, by which faith is nourished, hope increased, and clarity strengthened, we pray, O Lord, that we may learn to hunger for Christ, the true and living Bread, and strive to live by every word which proceeds from your mouth.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

Concluding Rite:
Final Blessing:
May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**

Suggested Closing Song: We Remember, #203