

Dear Padre,

I was taught that it is a requirement to fast at least one hour before receiving Communion. However, I've seen donuts out before Mass begins and hear candy wrappers being crumpled around me. This seems disrespectful to me.



It is important to use the correct words when describing a particular action. In this case, "requirement" does not really capture the full meaning and understanding of what the Church teaches. A better understanding is that it is a discipline and a practice of the Church to ordinarily observe the eucharistic fast for one hour before receiving holy Communion. If you are of a certain age, you may remember that there have been changes regarding the eucharistic fast. A "requirement" might suggest that the fast is integral to the sacrament itself. It is not.

The second part of your question seems to be a matter of perception. Based on your perception, you judge something to be not quite right. But, consider that there are many reasons why hospitality may be set up before Mass. The crumpling of wrappers could be something other than what you identify. Regardless, you are not required to assume the burden of policing what is taking place at Mass. It is much better to participate, celebrate, and be grateful for the sacrament that we gather to experience as a community of faith. ●

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
February 23	February 24	February 25	February 26	February 27	February 28	March 1
Lenten Weekday	Lenten Weekday	Lenten Weekday	Lenten Weekday	Lenten Weekday	Lenten Weekday	Second Sunday of Lent
Lv 19:1-2, 11-18	Is 55:10-11	Jon 3:1-10	Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25	Ez 18:21-28	Dt 26:16-19	Gn 2:1-4a
Mt 25:31-46	Mt 6:7-15	Lk 11:29-32	Mt 7:7-12	Mt 5:20-26	Mt 5:43-48	2 Tm 1:8b-10
						Mt 17:1-9

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.



A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

Today, signs of hope are increasingly found in care homes, communities for minors, centers for listening and acceptance, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and low-income schools. How many of these quiet signs of hope often go unnoticed and yet are so important for setting aside our indifference and inspiring others to become involved in various forms of volunteer work!

MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY OF THE POOR, ROME, JUNE 13, 2025

Our Parish COMMUNITY

February 22, 2026

First Sunday of Lent (A)

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7 / Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19 / Matthew 4:1-11



"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."

MATTHEW 4:1



Jesus for the Win

MIGUEL DULICK

The account of the temptations could be presented as a comical play. Pope Francis insisted, "Don't talk to the devil!" Indeed, Jesus does not engage in dialogue with Satan, much less any negotiation or any business. Stones become bread? Jesus may have fasted for forty days, but he's had plenty to eat—"every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Nor will Jesus "test" his Father by jumping off the "parapet of the temple" (like the bell tower of a gothic church). (See Matthew 5-7.) You don't play God, and you don't play *with* God. Satan really beclowns himself with the last temptation—promising the whole world if Jesus would just take a knee? No one would fall for that, would they?

Except—most of us. We'd do the bread; we'd do the jump; we'd definitely do the world! Look at the first reading, from Genesis. Adam and Eve give up paradise for a piece of fruit! It's a sad story because Eve does chat with the serpent, answering questions, allowing for a different point of view. But, as they say on Facebook, Satan "destroys" her! And Adam, too. If they didn't sew fig leaves for each other, the whole story would be unbearable. Even as they realize their sin, there is a little tenderness.

Saint Paul explains it clearly. Sin entered the world, but with Jesus Christ, there is an "overflow" of grace for the many. (See Romans 5:15.) And that's what Lent is about—a flood of grace. ●



LEARN ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY

Reflect

What grace do I pray for this Lent—for myself and for someone who is struggling?

First Reading (Joel 2:12-18)

Even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.
For gracious and merciful is he,
slow to anger, rich in kindness,
and relenting in punishment.
Perhaps he will again relent
and leave behind him a blessing,
Offerings and libations for the LORD, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion!
proclaim a fast, call an assembly;
Gather the people, notify the congregation;
Assemble the elders,
gather the children and the infants at the breast;
Let the bridegroom quit his room
and the bride her chamber.
Between the porch and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep,
And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people,
and make not your heritage a reproach,
with the nations ruling over them!
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land
and took pity on his people.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14, 17,
Grail translation, 1963)

Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offense.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offenses truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done.

A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervor sustain me.
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

Second Reading (2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2)

Brothers and sisters:
We are ambassadors for Christ,
as if God were appealing through us.
We implore you on behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God.
For our sake he made him to be sin
who did not know sin,
so that we might become the righteousness of God
in him.

Working together, then,
we appeal to you
not to receive the grace of God in vain.
For he says:
In an acceptable time I heard you,
and on the day of salvation I helped you.

Behold, now is a very acceptable time;
behold, now is the day of salvation.

Gospel Acclamation (see Psalm 95:8)

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Gospel (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)

Jesus said to his disciples:
"Take care not to perform righteous deeds
in order that people may see them;
otherwise,
you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

"When you give alms,
do not blow a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues
and in the streets to win the praise of others.
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,
so that your almsgiving may be secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray,
do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues

and on street corners
so that others may see them.
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you pray,
go to your inner room, close the door,
and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you fast,
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.
They neglect their appearance,
so that they may appear to others to be fasting.
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you fast,
anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you may not appear to be fasting,
except to your Father who is hidden.
And your Father who sees what is hidden
will repay you."

Reflection (2021, 2022)

Lent is a new beginning, the season of new growth for each of us, like spring for our souls. In the same way that we look forward to the new life of spring after a long winter, we look forward to Lent as a opportunity for new life in our everyday lives. Penance is not punishment, but a way of showing remorse for what we have done wrong, and the intention to change for the better.

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving – those are the three traditional forms of penance. Prayer makes us aware of God, and our obligation to worship Him. Fasting makes us aware of our bodies, and our obligation to live for the sake of goodness. Almsgiving makes us aware of those in need, and our obligation to offer them help.

Lent is the time to let go of ourselves, and return again to the best version of ourselves.

Reflection (2023)

The traditional forms of penance are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. But they are not meant for show. They are not meant so that others can see how good or pious we are. Rather, they are meant to help us change – for the better. Prayer lets us know that God is God, and we are not God. Fasting lets us know the weakness of our bodies, and our dependence on God and others. And almsgiving lets us know that we need to care for others. Lent is the time of revival for Christians, when we can return to who we should be.

Reflection (2024)

Some people like change, but most people prefer that things don't change, and prefer to remain in their comfort zones. Well, good news for those who like change, and bad news for those who don't like change, Lent is a time of change. Not just change for the sake of change, but change for the sake of becoming closer to Christ, and becoming a better Christian.

To be honest, none of us is perfect as we are, so all of us could use at least a little change in our lives. During Lent, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are some of the ways which help us change, by paying attention to God, paying attention to our bodies, and paying attention to others. Don't look at them as punishments, but rather as opportunities, so that at Easter, each of us can celebrate as a better "me."

Reflection (2025)

Spring is coming soon. Spring means new beginnings and new growth. Lent is the spring of our faith. It is a time for a new beginning of our faith, and new growth of our faith.

The prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are not meant to punish us, but they are meant to remove all that prevents us from growing. And if we grow in faith, Easter will be a particularly joyful celebration.

Reflection (2026)

Sometimes we look back at our lives, particularly those who are older, and wonder what it would be like if we did things differently. Sometimes we wish we could go back and change things. Well, the truth is, we can't change the past.

But we can change the present, which makes the future a very different time than it would otherwise be.

Lent is a new beginning. It doesn't change the past, but Lent allows us to let go of the past, and start over again – in a new and better way. That way, our future can be closer to the way God wants for us.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - YEAR A

First Reading (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.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17, *Grail translation, 1963*)

Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offense.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offenses truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done.

A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervor sustain me.
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

Second Reading (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.

Gospel Acclamation (Matthew 4:4b)

One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word
that comes forth from the mouth of God.

Gospel (Matthew 4:1-11)

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.

Reflection (2023)

The story of the temptation of the Lord in the desert is a familiar one. The first temptation is through hunger and physical needs, the second is through expectations and demands, and the third is through the worship of power and possessions. Jesus does not fall for any of these.

It's interesting that the second temptation, to demand of God what God has promised, is something we often do ourselves. God says he will protect us. During the *Covid-19* pandemic, I heard many people deny any precautions, vaccinations, or treatments, saying "I have faith in God, and God will protect me." That sure sounds faith-filled. But in fact, it sounds more to me like the devil saying "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." (Psalm 91:11-12) Acting recklessly and then expecting God to protect us is not faith. It is tempting God. God will protect us, but God expects us to do those things that are prudent and listen to those people *he has sent* with good knowledge and advice. That is how he protects us.

But the devil is always ready to tempt us with what seems to be logical and sensible. Like Jesus, we need to call him out, and clearly follow the Lord himself.

Reflection (2026)

The serpent, the devil, Satan, is a prominent character in today's readings, and his role is to deceive, to mislead, and to instill doubt where there is no reason to doubt.

So in the garden of Eden, he confuses the woman, so that she does what she already knows she should not do, and the man does the same.

In the desert, he tries to entice Jesus with promises of physical needs, expectations, and power and possessions.

Those are the same temptations that we experience, and so often we find ourselves confused and enticed, and doing what we know we should not do, and desiring things we don't really need.

It might sound like we are doomed. But the good news is that we are not doomed, and as St. Paul tells us, that "through the obedience of the one," who is Jesus Christ, "the many," which includes each of us, "will be made righteous." So we can overcome the lies of the devil, and possess "the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ."

22 February 2026
First Sunday of Lent - Year A

Penitential Rite

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.
Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

Almighty Father, we come before you, lifting up in prayer the needs of our Church, our world,
and our whole human family:

- for Pope Leo, for strength as he promotes the values of the Gospel, we pray
- for the leaders of our country and the leaders of other countries, that they will work together humbly for the common good, we pray
- for peace where there is conflict, and justice where there is injustice, we pray
- for the conversion of those who do evil, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that our prayer, fasting and almsgiving will lead us to follow Christ more closely, we pray
- for all those who have died, that they will be saved, we pray
- and for your other intentions

(pause)

for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Merciful Father, we ask you to listen to our petitions, preserve us from temptations, and lead us to follow you more faithfully and more completely during this season of Lent. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Message for Lent, 2026

Dear faithful of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston,

We have begun the holy season of Lent with ashes on our foreheads and hope in our hearts. Lent's goal is to prepare us spiritually for the great feast of Easter, when we celebrate the Lord Jesus' resurrection from the dead in which we find our own hope for immortality.

We know from experience how easy it is to succumb to temptations to sin and let our spiritual lives sink into routine or indifference. We need a wake-up call and Lent gives us one. Like the baseball players who brush off the rust of a lethargic winter to get back into shape for the new season, we practice prayer, fasting and almsgiving in Lent to open our veins to God's grace and allow it to transform us into more faithful disciples of Christ.

If you have a habit of daily prayer, keep it up and consider how you might extend it either by spending more time with the Lord or enriching your prayer by meditating on Scripture. If you have not been praying, start now. Give the Lord at least 15 or 20 minutes a day at the time you find most convenient. (For many of us, that time is early in the morning before daily work or study begins.) Just place yourself before God, briefly present to him your concerns and projects of that day, invoke him slowly and repeatedly by saying "Father," "Jesus" or "Spirit", and then be quiet. God's Spirit in you will do the rest.

As for fasting, Pope St. Gregory the Great said, "The principal fasting in Lent is fasting from sin." Reflecting this understanding, Pope Leo XIV in his Lenten message for 2026 urges us to "refrain from words that offend and hurt our neighbor:" harsh words, slander, rash judgments and speaking ill of others when they cannot defend themselves. Bodily fasting is useful, not as an end in itself – a Lenten fast is not for the purpose of losing weight! – but for curbing our desires for the things of this world and moving us to *hunger and thirst for righteousness* [Matthew 6:6]. Pope St. Leo I said: "What we forego by fasting is to be given as alms to the poor," underscoring our responsibility in charity to share what we have with those in need.

Almsgiving may take many forms. Giving money to a poor family to help them buy groceries or to a pantry which offers them a bag of food is one form but so is tutoring a child struggling with math or reading, visiting or calling a sick neighbor or relative or befriending an immigrant afraid of being separated from his or her spouse and children. The heart of almsgiving is overcoming self-concern in order to do good to others. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you* [Matthew 7:12].

If these counsels for keeping a good Lent sound familiar, they are from the Lord's words in the Gospel we heard on Ash Wednesday. Jesus himself gives us the way to make our Lent fruitful in holiness and good works. Commit now, if you have not already done so, to give your soul a vigorous workout in the gymnasium of Lent so that you will be in good shape when Easter comes. Then you, with the newly baptized and confirmed, will rejoice in the power of God's love to make his divine life pulsate more vibrantly in you.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston