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## 1st Sunday of Lent - 26 February 2023

Anthony Doran

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# 26 February 2023

## First Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Anthony Doran

### **Pastoral Note: First Sunday of Lent – Scrutinies**

By Vincent Glynn

The Rite of Election should normally take place on the First Sunday of Lent. Many dioceses celebrate this rite at the Cathedral in the presence of the bishop. The rite is celebrated within Mass, after the homily. This Rite closes the period of preparation called the catechumenate. The catechumens will be called ‘the elect’ or ‘illuminandi’- those who will be enlightened in Baptism. Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA 105-124).

### **Introduction**

Having marked ourselves with ash last Wednesday to begin our Lenten journey, we come this First Sunday of Lent. We learn that while the voice of temptation is subtle and insidious, the obedience of Jesus is clear and strong and indeed makes us righteous.

### **Penitential Act**

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you resisted temptation. Lord have mercy.

You lead us to redemption. Christ have mercy.

You give us the bread of life. Lord have mercy.

### **Collect**

*The Oration*

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.

This prayer is first encountered in the tradition as a sixth to seventh century oration for the first Sunday of Lent, a place it retains to this day. This opening collect for the season establishes a framework for pursuing the discipline of the season. In this it states the commonplace, yet seeks that this discipline become more and more an established part of the Christian life. Lent is a 'holy' time. While this holiness is from the penitential emphasis the season lends to the celebration of Sunday itself, more so it is because its reference is the resurrection. The yearly observances are not an end in themselves but serve to heighten our receptivity for the mysteries that God has worked amongst creation. Consequently, the aim of our observances is not simply self-control. Rather it is towards our growth in being able to stand under the paschal mystery and becoming more receptive to the riches wrought by Christ. The annual nature of the cycle is a reminder of our need for ongoing transformation into richer believers, more completely taken up and remade in Christ. Growth in understanding is necessarily complemented by right action. Again, this is more than obedience. Our worthy conduct brings out the effects of the riches hidden in Christ. These are acts of building the reign of God. Their orientation is towards our growth in love.

#### **Acknowledgement**

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

## **First Reading**

### **Genesis 2:7–9, 3:1–7**

Our first reading this Sunday tells the story of the temptation in the Garden of Eden. We learn that the tempter is subtle and smooth, personified by the silken, deceptive voice of the serpent.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 50(51): 3-6, 12-14, 17**

*Be merciful O Lord, for we have sinned.*

The fourth of the penitential psalms is a personal lament over sinfulness, but also a confession of faith in God who makes us whole once more.

## **Second Reading**

### **Romans 5:12–19 or Romans 5:12, 17–19**

Our Second Reading this Sunday is a reflection by Paul on the obedience of Jesus to the Father's love: Jesus' obedience saves us once and for all and makes us right with God.

## Gospel Reading

### Matthew 4:1–11

Our Gospel Reading this Sunday tells the story of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. In this, we hear echoes of the sojourn of the Israelites in the desert for forty years. In remaining faithful to God, Jesus further establishes himself as the Son of God.

## Reflection

You know, the Devil would be quite comfortable sitting in our church today. In the midst of us. In the midst of our comfort and complacency. You see, in our modern world, we have done much to downplay the reality and presence of evil. We rarely talk about sin – we talk about poor choices or bad choices. We rarely talk about the Devil, the Evil One who tempts us. And this is exactly the sort of climate that the Devil likes. When we downplay his power. When we deny his existence. You see, that's how the Devil works. Subtly, very subtly. Creeping in and setting up house when we least expect it. When we think he's nowhere in evidence.

It's much harder to confront the reality and presence of evil in our world. It's much harder to confront the Devil. Confront the Evil One himself.

In today's Gospel, Jesus confronts the Evil One. The author of Matthew's Gospel doesn't tell us what sort of pain and anguish that this caused Jesus. But, I think, it is fair to assume that it must have caused Jesus a great deal of anguish and pain. When confronting the Devil, to be tempted to doubt the goodness of God, must have caused pain to Jesus. To be tempted to doubt his relationship with his Father and his Father's goodness, just must have caused anguish to Jesus. Quite simply, when the Devil tempts Jesus with the three things which we would say are essential to a flourishing life – food, family, and faith – this must have been close to soul-destroying for Jesus.

Pain and anguish are an inevitable part of life. But they can, in fact, be for us, sacraments. Because sacraments are vehicles for God's grace. Pain and anguish can find us on the other side of the divide. As though we have crossed the Red Sea and wandered through the wilderness only to have arrived at a more tender state of mind than we once possessed when dwelling among the fleshpots of Egypt. It's a state of mind – or more correctly – 'a state of soul' that can best be described as vulnerable. And if we are vulnerable, we are more likely to be compassionate. And if we are compassionate, then I think we're not very far from the state of soul possessed by Jesus, who rejects the comfortable alternatives offered to him by the Devil in today's Gospel. And in rejecting the so-called comfort offered by the Devil, Jesus chooses to stand with the anguished of this world – and if we're honest – that's most of us, at least some of the time. And in choosing to stand with the anguished and those in pain, Jesus reveals that God's might and power reside in nothing less than his absolutely compassionate love.

It is precisely because of the pain and anguish involved in confronting the Evil One that, at the beginning of Lent, on Ash Wednesday, we signed ourselves with ashes. Ashes are what's left over after a fire. But to get ash, something has to burn. To be

consumed by flame and to be reduced to nothing. But out of the ash and destruction comes new life. Just look at any of the parts of our land which have been affected by the recent bushfires. New life has already begun to spring forth from the charred remnants of the bush.

In confronting the reality and presence of evil in our midst, we stand with Jesus who does the same thing in today's Gospel. And in standing with Jesus, our pain and anguish are consumed in the fire of his love. His absolutely compassionate love.



***God's angels will  
protect you.***

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

The compassion of God has been emphasised today in the readings and psalm, so let us turn our faces to God and offer our needs.

## Petitions

We pray for our Church, especially Pope Francis and all clergy and lay leaders. May they truly be the face of God's compassion in our troubled world.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our government and judicial system. May compassion be present in their work towards an ordered and just society.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have not experienced compassion and remain in difficult circumstances where their suffering is ignored or unknown. May they be revived by love and peace through the efforts of those who plead their cause.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for ourselves when we suffer temptation to put food, family and power before our love of God. May we be enlightened by the Spirit to not give in to the power of evil.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are ill and suffering mental anguish. May they be helped through the kindness and gentle hands of those who are able to serve them.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have died in our community and for those who mourn. May they be comforted.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

All these needs and the needs held silently within our hearts we place in God's hands with faith and hope. We do this through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, the Christ.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

### First Sunday of Lent, Year A (26 February 2023)

| Title   | AOV1 | AOV2 | AOVK | CWB | CWBII | GA  |
|---|------|------|------|-----|-------|-----|
| Again we keep this solemn fast                      |      |      |      |     | 285   |     |
| Ashes   |      | 16   |      |     |       | 209 |
| Be not afraid                                       | 114  |      |      |     | 653   | 449 |
| Be with me, Lord (Cox)                              |      |      |      |     |       | 52  |
| Be with me, Lord (Haugen)                           |      |      |      | 627 | 286   | 53  |
| Be with me, Lord (Joncas)                           | 116  |      |      |     |       |     |
| Father of mercy, God of consolation                 |      |      |      | 670 |       |     |
| For the faces that I know                           |      |      | 137  |     |       |     |
| Forty days and forty nights                         |      |      |      |     | 288   |     |
| From ashes to the living font                       |      |      |      |     | 289   |     |
| Grant to us, O Lord                                 |      |      |      | 698 | 291   | 303 |
| Hear us, almighty Lord<br>( <i>Attende Domine</i> ) |      |      |      |     | 292   |     |
| I am the bread of life                              | 49   |      |      | 718 | 509   | 204 |
| Lord Jesus, as we turn from sin                     |      |      |      | 735 | 294   |     |
| May this Lenten discipline                          |      |      |      | 746 | 295   |     |
| O Father, I know I can count on your mercy          |      |      |      | 762 | 122   |     |
| O God, creator of us all                            |      |      |      | 764 | 296   |     |
| O Sun of justice, fill our hearts                   |      |      |      |     | 178   | 2   |
| On eagle's wings                                    | 153  |      |      |     | 654   | 452 |
| Praise to the holiest in the height                 |      |      |      | 791 | 585   | 410 |
| Praise to you, O Christ our saviour                 | 28   |      |      |     | 587   | 407 |
| Return to God                                       |      |      |      |     | 298   | 304 |
| The glory of these forty days                       |      |      |      | 825 | 301   |     |
| Tree of life  |      |      |      |     | 300   | 307 |
| Yes, I shall arise                                  |      |      |      | 867 | 648   |     |

| Title                           | AOVNG | S&S1 | S&S2 |
|---------------------------------|-------|------|------|
| 40 days                         |       |      | 310  |
| Be merciful, O Lord (Angrisano) |       | 66   |      |
| Be merciful, O Lord (Thomas)    |       |      | 257  |
| Beyond the days                 |       | 101  |      |
| Jesus, bread of life            | 80    |      |      |
| Tree of life                    | 138   |      |      |

## **Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy**

Psalm 50: *Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.*

|          | CWB | GA     | JOBA   | LPA    | PM     |
|----------|-----|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Psalm 50 | 202 | 40, 41 | pg. 28 | pg. 27 | pg. 41 |

## **Music selections by Michael Mangan**

**Out of ashes** (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Distribution of Ashes]

**Create a new heart** (FWS) *Based on Ps 50/51* [Gathering, Gifts, Recessional]

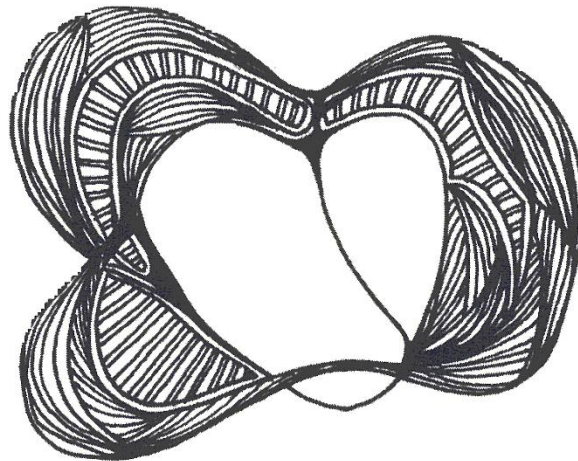
**Be merciful O Lord** (LCC) *Ps 50/51* [Children's Lectionary]

**This is the time** (TT) [Gathering, Recessional]

**Lenten acclamation** (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]

**Lenten Gospel acclamation – Mass Jubilee** (MJC) [Gospel Acclamation]

**Turn back to God** (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]



A pure heart  
create for me  
O God.