



**BIBLE FAITH SHARING, FEBRUARY 26, 2023**  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (CA)**

**A Reading from the Book of Genesis**

(Gen. 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.



**Reader:** The Word of the Lord

**Response:** Thanks be to God

**Reflection:**

*Many people do not realize there are two stories of how God created man and woman in the Bible found in chapters 1 & 2 of the Book of Genesis. Today's first reading comes to us from the second story of God's creation. This can be confusing to those who only see the stories in the Bible from strictly one perspective. The point or truth is, regardless of how humans were created, it was God's doing. Many believe the serpent in the story is the devil himself, although the reading doesn't say this, but rather calls it a creation of God. This is a classic story of temptation. Many people tend to want to blame Adam and Eve (means "Man" and "Woman" in Hebrew) for sin and death in the world. However, this is not the point of the story either. Adam and Eve can be anyone of us. The number one strategy of evil is to get us to doubt God, his word, and his authority, without considering any consequences, which is exactly what the serpent succeeded in doing. Without God, his word, and no consequences, we are convinced we don't need God, so become our own god, which God warned will bring us death and destruction. There are serpents (evil) that continues tempting us today. They will only succeed when we allow them to. May we never doubt God nor lose trust in him.*

**Responsorial Psalm 51:3-6,12-13,17**

(Ps. 51:3-6,12-13,17)

**R. (cf. 3a) 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. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

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

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

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

## A Reading for the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 5:12, 17-19

(Rom. 5:12, 17-19)

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 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.

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord

**Response:** Thanks be to God

### **Reflection:**

*When someone is convicted of a crime, they go before a judge who sentences them to time in jail. According to the law, the time given should correspond with the crime they are convicted of. Sometimes, for whatever reason, the judge decides to give the convicted person a break, and orders them to be released or to be given probation/parole instead. This is usually a big relief to the person standing before the judge. In today's second reading, Paul compares the sinful consequences and death sentence Adam brought upon humanity to the holy and lifesaving consequences of Jesus. In fact, God, our judge, not only released the one-man Adam from his sin, but went even further by releasing all people of the entire world from the consequences of sin and death, offering them a life without parole. That is, eternal life that can never be overcome by death again. God sent his son into the world to restore to life what sin destroyed. It's hard to imagine. It's like being in court and receiving the death sentence for the crimes you committed. Then someone steps up, who never committed a crime and says, "Give me the death sentence instead" and you get to go free. To do what Jesus did for us takes much more than courage or even loyalty, it takes great love. This doesn't mean we can keep sinning because God will always forgive us. It should encourage us to want to change our life, ask God for help when we are struggling to change, and do our best to avoid temptations to sin.*

## A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Matt. 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.



**Presider:** The Gospel of the Lord

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

### **Reflection:**

*After being baptized in the Jordan river, Jesus heads into the desert alone where he has an encounter with the devil. The number 40 is used often in the Bible symbolizing a period of time. For example, 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert during their exodus from Egypt searching for the land promised them by God, or the 40 days Moses spent fasting on Mount Sinai. Here, Satan hurls temptations at Jesus, which represent some of our most common internal spiritual struggles in a failed attempt to entice Jesus to use his divine power to serve his own human desires of physical comfort, selfish wealth, to rule over other people, and finally, to save his own life. Satan even quotes scripture, distorting its meaning in an attempt to convince Jesus not to do the will of God the Father. Jesus' desert journey is our desert journey, where we too are tempted to turn from God. But Jesus showed us it is possible to overcome temptations by staying in close relationship with him as he is with the Father. The last sentence in today's reading tells us temptations will come and go throughout our life. Out of God's love and mercy, he gave us his son Jesus, who provides us with a church (community of believers) the scriptures, the Eucharist, prayer, and more, to support and strengthen us in our desert journey of daily life.*