

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - YEAR A

[Gen. 2:7-9; 16-18, 2-5, 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12-19; Mt. 4:1-11]

Excerpts of Lenten Weekly Reflections – Share Lent 2026

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Brothers and sisters, The First Reading from Genesis explains how sin first entered the world. After creating human beings and planting a garden where life can flourish, God commanded the first humans to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God has defined what is good and what is evil. God gives humans the freedom of choice: are they going to trust God’s definition of good and evil or are they going to seize autonomy and define these terms for themselves? By disobeying God, we see how the sin of Adam and Eve quickly spiraled out of control. The first casualty was human relationships. The man and woman suddenly realized how vulnerable they were; they could not even trust each other. They made clothes and hid their bodies from one another.

In today’s Psalm, we observe the second casualty of sin: alienation from God. Psalm 51 is a prayer of someone who is suffering deeply under the guilt of their sin and laments their separation from God. In the first two verses, the author begs God to “blot out” their transgressions and “wash (away)” their sin. Moreover, in the third and fourth verses, the psalmist asks for “a clean heart” and for a “new and right spirit” that would restore them back to right relationship with God.

In the Second Reading from Romans, Paul concludes that due to the “original sin” of Adam’s disobedience, the power of sin has corrupted all humanity, which is now in open revolt against the Creator.

In the Gospel, we see that even Jesus is tempted by the devil to sin by rebelling against God. However, Christ rejects the devil three times. In each of his refusals, Jesus quotes from the Book of Deuteronomy. This connection is intentional. The testing of Jesus recaps the experience of the people of Israel. In their wandering through the desert, Israel and its leaders had often failed God’s covenant. But Jesus, faithful Jew and faithful Son of God, will not fail despite the efforts of Satan to draw him away from his salvific mission. According to St. Paul, God’s act in Christ is in total contrast to the disastrous effects of the virus of sin and “so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous”.

What does all of this mean for us? We live in a fallen world full of sin. Individual sin—rejecting God’s definition of good and evil for our own—quickly spirals out of control. Personal sins also have social implications, separating us from our fellow humans, as well as isolating us from God. St. John Paul II, in his 1987 papal encyclical *On Social Concern*, further expanded on this insight and discussed the concept of “social sin” or “structures of evil.” This theological term refers to personal sins of individuals that are consolidated into structures that become the source of new sins for others.

Examples of this include laws, social structures or economic systems that violate human rights, victimize the powerless or institutionalize an unjust distribution of goods. St. John Paul II applied the term social sin to describe the growing gap between rich and poor nations, contrasting the superabundance enjoyed by a few with the desperate struggle for survival experienced by so many. Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis also provided longer lists of evil social structures, but I won't go into details or naming them.

As we know, Lent always calls us to repentance. The reality of God's Kingdom and the consciousness of living in a new and decisive age of salvation should move us to change our ways of thinking and our ways of acting. The touchstone of authentic repentance is good deeds. We need to reject sin in our personal lives through the sacrament of reconciliation and through individual acts of charity *and* in our social lives.

May this Eucharist help us reconnect with God, with human relationships, and even the whole of creation.