

PASTORAL LETTER
FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT 2026

My dear Brothers and Sisters

Once again, we join the Christian family throughout the world on the annual Lenten pilgrimage that will lead us to celebrate the Lord's resurrection at Easter. Each year, it is a journey in which we are asked to pay greater attention to the call to live a truer and more authentic way of life and to be more open to receive the forgiveness and mercy of our God. The Church asks us to focus on our need for repentance and forgiveness, not to promote a morbid curiosity in us about our faults and failures, but rather to help us live out more fully the joy of being God's adopted sons and daughters in Christ.

Each year the Season of Lent opens with an account of Jesus in the wilderness being tempted by the devil.

Temptation for Jesus meant the same as it meant for Adam and Eve and as it also means for us. He had to choose between good and evil, between doing the Father's will or his own. Jesus was tempted right through life. His victory in the desert was not the winning of the war, but merely the winning of a battle.

So, if Jesus could not avoid temptation, neither can we. It is a struggle between the passions and the spirit. It is not something to be ashamed of. It is not our destiny simply never to fall, but having fallen, to get up and start again.

At his Baptism, Jesus received the fullness of the Holy Spirit and immediately after the Baptism, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, retires into the desert for forty days, during which he fasted and was tempted by the devil.

His visit to the wilderness presents him with the challenge of facing himself head on – of whom he really is and the values for which he stands. There, away from everything and everyone, he is challenged through the wiles of the devil, to examine his reasons for the things he does and things he says. It is not an easy experience for Jesus. It is, nonetheless, a grace filled experience – led by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit.

Lent is an annual invitation to us by the Church to step out into our own wilderness experience. We all get caught up in the practicalities of life. After all, it is natural to work and rush and make plans for ourselves and those close to us.

Lent, is a call to create moments, at least, when we can look inwards as well as outwards ... to look into our own depths. Each year, Lent offers the opportunity to review what spiritual shape we are in, to reflect on what is really important to us and to look at our own motivations for doing the things we do and saying the things we say.

Lent is an invitation also, like Jesus' own wilderness experience, to catch a glimpse of what rich glories God's call holds for us. For it is in our Lenten wilderness experience that God wants to meet us to offer healing, new life and new beginnings.

The little sacrifices we make, or the extra effort we put in to be a better person this Lent, are all part of the journey that in the weeks ahead will take us from the wilderness to the city of Jerusalem, to Calvary, the empty tomb, and the new life of Easter. Jesus has made this journey before us and he accompanies us as we make the journey in his footsteps once again. And we could have no better companion along the way.

The saintly 4th Century Bishop of Milan, St Ambrose, expresses beautifully this simple truth in these words:

“We have everything in Christ ...

He is everything for us.

If you wish to heal a wound, he is the doctor.

If you burn with fever, he is the rising

Spring of refreshing water.

If you have need of support, he is your strength.

If you long for heaven, he is the way.

If you seek nourishment, he is the bread.”

I wish you a happy and holy Lent.

Yours sincerely in Christ, the Redeemer,

+ Rayol

