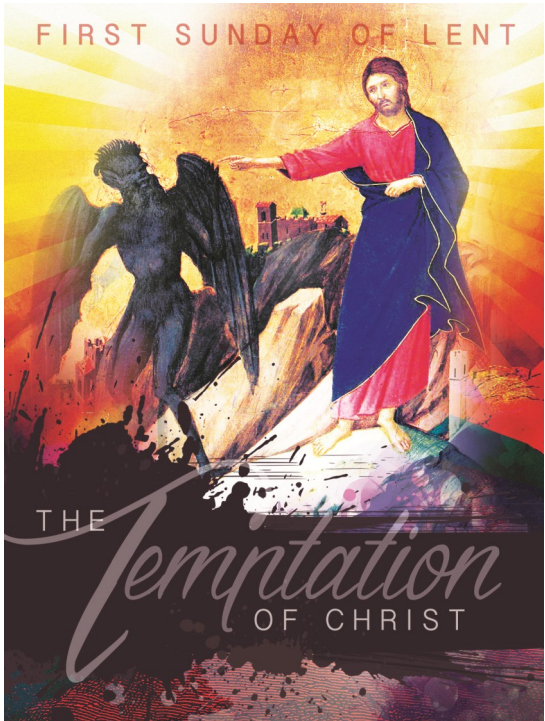


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we enter the season of Lent, we are called to reflect on our relationship with God and our neighbor. To help us do this, the Church gives us three tools: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These three tools help Lent to be a time of growth in faith. It is also a time to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Easter, the most important feast of our liturgical year.

Today we hear that Jesus had to face the battle with the devil, the battle with temptations, before His public ministry begins. Lent is a time of battle. What did God 'give up' for Lent? Himself. May we 'give up' of ourselves for Him as well through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As Christ fought for us, may we fight for Him.

Let us focus for a moment on the first of the tools the Church gives us for Lent: prayer. A big struggle we may be dealing with is thinking that we don't have time to pray. If anyone in the world might have seemed to have an excuse for not having time to pray, it would be Mother Teresa and her tireless sisters in the Missionaries of Charity. But Mother Teresa never allowed any amount of work to encroach on her prayer time or that of her sisters. **Mother Teresa knew that, without prayer, everything else failed.**

We may be tempted to think that prayer is just for priests and religious, but prayer is the heart of every Christian life. I invite you to think about it this way: if you take the heart out, the body will die. If you make the heart stronger, the body will be stronger. If you make greater demands on the body, the heart needs to be extra-strong. **It's easy to downgrade prayer amidst the constant demands of work, family, school, and other practical things, but if we aren't praying, every aspect of our life suffers.**

One way to make prayer a consistent practice is to schedule regular prayer time for yourself at home. A holy half-hour at home daily, or even a holy 15 minutes, can keep you centered and spiritually strong, even if the pace of life seems overwhelming at times. It will help you to keep praying even if you can't make a holy hour in church as often as you would like to. Every moment of every day can be united to Christ through prayer. While constant prayer can seem a daunting proposition, it can be achieved with some guidance and grace.

I encourage you to make prayer a priority in your daily life, especially during this Lenten season. You can set aside a specific time and place for prayer, or you can pray throughout the day, whenever you have a moment of pause or gratitude. You can stop by the parish and make a visit to Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. You can also join us for the various prayer opportunities that we offer, such as daily mass, adoration, the rosary, and the Stations of the Cross.

Mother Teresa once said, "If we don't take time to pray, we could not do this work." **Have we discovered, like Mother Teresa, that if we don't take time to pray, we cannot live a Christian life?** Well, Lent is here to help us. Who knows, maybe it will be our last Lent, our last chance to ask the Lord for the grace of conversion. Let us take advantage.

Peace,