



1st Sunday of Lent
February 22, 2026
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So in our first reading here on the first Sunday of Lent, we hear about original sin in the Garden of Eden. Now, just before that, in the Garden of Eden, God created this beautiful place of harmony and order. And now we can look at that in three different senses. The first sense is within ourselves, right? There's harmony and order within our intellect, what we know, our passions, our emotions, our desires, and then our will, like what we choose. So all those were ordered together before the Fall.

And then also we can look at there's order and harmony with God. Scripture says that Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden. Means that there's this closeness, this tangible closeness, relationship that Adam and Eve had with the Lord. But there's also harmony between others, like between people, between Adam and Eve. It says that Adam and Eve were naked, without shame. And that's something we don't have anymore. So there's this order within the self, within God, or between God and humans. And then between humans in their own relationships.

Now, what does the garden and the human situation look like afterwards, after the first sin, original sin? Well, there's disorder between the self and between God and between other humans. There's disorder between self, meaning that our intellect, what we know, and our emotions, our desires, they don't always line up with what we choose, what we will anymore. We have what's called concupiscence. We have this inclination or this desire to sin. So there's this disorder within ourselves.

But there's also disorder after the Fall, between us and God, right? We no longer walk with God, so to speak. And God can feel distant at times. And we have a hard time hearing him and his desires and his words that he's speaking to us.

But there's also disorder between us, other people, right? We no longer see everyone as God sees them anymore. We see people, unfortunately, as means to an end or objects to be used for our own gain. And so there was order and there was harmony. But then now, after the Fall, there's disorder and there's disharmony.

Now, what we do during Lent, the three pillars of Lent, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. You might wonder, like, why those three. Like, there's. It seems like there's some other categories we could throw in there too, as well. But why those three? Well, church fathers recognize that there's kind of a correlation between prayer, fasting, and almsgiving and those three disorders or those lack of harmonies that we mentioned because of the Fall.

So let's look at fasting that is meant to combat the disorder that we find within ourselves now. Because when I fast, I'm denying my passions, I'm denying my disordered desires that I have, in order to strengthen my will against them and against temptation. And so that's meant to combat the disorder that I experience within myself.

And why do we pray? Why do we focus on prayer specifically during Lent? Well, that's to combat the harmony or the disharmony or the disorder that we experience with God. We intentionally focus on drawing close to the Lord, and that doesn't mean he always feels close. But making those acts of faith and showing up consistently to prayer, that strengthens our relationship with the Lord. And it gets us closer to what was in the garden, right, where we can walk with the Lord.

And finally, why do we do almsgiving during Lent? Well, that's to combat the disorder that we find between us, between human beings in our relationships. Because if I'm giving alms, if I'm sacrificing my time or my talent or my treasure to help other people, that helps me see people as God sees them and not as objects to be used or means to some sort of personal gain.



And so all three of these, all three of these focuses that we have in Lent, these pillars of Lent, are meant to bring us back and to combat those disorders that are the result of original sin. And so I invite us, now that we've begun Lent, hopefully we all have our commitments that we've made starting Ash Wednesday. But even if you haven't, this is a good time to pray and kind of consider, like, am I choosing commitments this Lent that we're going to effectively combat the disorders that I see within myself, that I see within my own relationship with the Lord, and that I see within my relationship with other people.

And it's okay to kind of tweak our commitments as we go through Lent. It's kind of like a school. We can see it like a school where we're exercising and we're building those muscles, so to speak, as we take on these commitments and these spiritual practices during Lent. And so that's why we focus on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent. And that's our first reading.

But in the Gospel today, we hear about Jesus going into the desert. And of course, Lent is often described as the spiritual desert, so to speak. And when we think of a desert, we normally think of very barren place where there's a lot of harsh terrain, there's not very much food or water. It's hard to live. And this is all true. But if we look at the way God sees the desert in the Bible, in Scripture, God sees it in a different way. And we want to learn to see the desert, especially our spiritual desert of Lent, the way that God sees it.

So let's listen to a couple passages. In Hosea, chapter two, God speaks of alluring his people into the wilderness, into the desert. Specifically, so that he can speak tenderly to them and to win them over by showing his love for them in a place where they cannot provide for themselves.

So God wants to provide for his people in a place where they cannot provide for themselves in order to draw them closer to Him. Okay, so in this desert of Lent, God wants to court us. He wants to win us over. He wants to show his love for us and during Lent, by choosing not to rely on things that we normally rely on to make us comfortable. By giving up those things, we allow God to show his love for us and how he wants to provide for us.

And in Isaiah, God promises to do something new in the desert for his people. He promises to provide springs of water in the wasteland in the desert, and to make rivers flow through the desert, where great trees will grow and produce fruit for his people. So God promises to make the desert into a new Garden of Eden. He wants to renew the Garden of Eden the way it was before sin, the way it was when there was harmony and order. So he wants the desert to be a place of encounter where there is harmony and order within ourselves, with God, and with other people. So that's what God wants Lent to be for us. He wants to turn the spiritual desert that we experienced during Lent into a new Garden of Eden by the end of Easter.

And like it was before original sin, where there's harmony and order. So as we begin Lent, it should feel like a desert. It should be difficult. It should stretch us. So if it doesn't, that means we're probably not stretching ourselves enough. That means we're probably not doing what God wants us to do this Lent. We're doing what we want to do, okay.

But by the end of Lent, by the time Easter comes, we should notice that there are streams and rivers of grace in our life that weren't there before. We should see the new fruit that has come from the seeds that God has planted in the desert of Lent. So that's God's desire for all of us this Lent.

But, like, that's God's plan. But is that your plan? Are we on the same page with God? So are you going to participate and cooperate with God in His plan? For these 40 days. And we participate and cooperate with God by engaging in those three pillars, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, combating those disorders that are caused by sin.

And if we do this well, what happens? What's the result? Well, we find this result in Scripture as well. If we go to the Song of Songs, which is a beautiful love story poem between God and His people. The Song of



Song recounts that the bride, that's us, she comes out of the desert united with her bridegroom. And the bridegroom is God.

So God, Scripture tells us, wants to unite himself with us in the desert this Lent. So let's try to see this Lent, this desert, as God sees it as a place of encounter, harmony, order and courtship, where we let God win us over and provide for us, where we cooperate with God through committing to the prayer, fasting and almsgiving that he is asking us to do, so that he can plant his seeds in us and he can make those rivers of grace flow through the deserts of our soul and to produce that fruit, that harmony, the order that God desires us to live as his saints here on earth.