

MARCH 5, 2017



# FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



GENESIS 2:7-9; 3:1-7

PSALM 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

ROMANS 5:12-19 OR 5:12, 17-19

MATTHEW 4:1-11

## REFLECTION

"There's seven deadly sins. Which one's yours?" My friend, Paul, a youth minister, knows how to get a good conversation going. "Sloth, envy, greed, pride, gluttony, lust, and anger. What's your weakness? I'll go first . . ." Paul's good-natured way of asking bold questions that everyone can identify with had a way of loosening up the group and getting to the heart of the matter. Everyone's guard came down as they talked about the things with which they struggle the most, and they began to see that others shared in some of the same struggles, too.

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Lent. These forty-plus days are a time of conversion—days of turning toward Christ and allowing him to change our hearts. We need constant conversion because we all have a tendency to turn away from God in ways that harm us and our relationships. That's what sin is. When we talk about sin, it's not meant to make us feel bad. Just the opposite: it's an invitation to think about what's not working for us and to let go of those things that keep us from God. It's an invitation to accept that we need God—the God who is loving and forgiving; the One who deeply longs to embrace us in his arms. Our Catholic faith tradition reminds us that, no matter how hard we try, "It's not possible not to sin." We cannot save ourselves either—that's what Jesus is for! It's comforting, in a strange way, to know that we are powerless to save ourselves because it opens us up to our need for a savior in Christ Jesus! We don't rejoice in being sinful, we rejoice that we have Jesus who showed us how to live and who can identify with our every weakness—because he was tempted too. In his living, dying, and rising he sets us free.

## ACTION

As we embark on this Lenten journey, take a spiritual inventory of the ways in which you've turned your back on God. Write these things down and consider the ways in which you might make things right again. Look for ways to own up to what you've done. Say you're sorry and mean it. Ask God to show you a different way next time. Give your whole heart back to God. But most of all don't get stuck. After all, Lent is less about us and more about God. That is, the focus needs to remain on what God has done and can do, and where God is calling us to be.



## JOURNALING QUESTIONS



● Fasting is a Lenten tradition. The idea is to abstain from one thing and to practice charity instead. What is one thing that you might fast from this Lent?