

## **First Sunday of Lent**

**February 22, 2026**

**Thus, death came to all.**

**Became a living being.**

**Get away Satan!**

rvb.

**Daily scriptures, Haikus (17 syllables-line 1, 5 syllables, line 2, 7 syllables, and line 3, 5 syllables) reflect the meaning and messages of the scripture readings), prayer, coping with stress, doing good deeds, and a thought-provoking quotation – one day at a time. Let us continue the Resurrection Steps of Our Lenten Journey. -Roger J. Vanden Busch.**

**Note:** the daily reflections for Ash Wednesday through Saturday were part of last week's mailing for the 15th of February, the 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time – do not forget about them.

### **Monday of the First Week of Lent. - February 23.**

**Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18 – Law says do not, but/One law calls to love them/Flower among weeds.**

**Matthew 25:31-46 – Jesus in disguise/Some see, others pass eyes closed/Goats are blind creatures.**

**Prayer: Give me the vision to see the presence of your Son in the hand of another whose eyes plead, “Help me!”**

**Coping with stress: Eliminate the amount of caffeine; consume in the morning or early afternoon; avoid evenings.**

**Two Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:**

- 1. Be a better partner if you are attached. If you have a girlfriend/wife or boyfriend/husband, think about how you can be a better partner to her/him. When you are in a relationship, it is easy to make demands and have expectations about what your partner should do or be. It is more difficult to take ownership of what you are not doing or being yourself. Commit yourself to be a better partner and release your expectations of your partner. Both of you will be happier that way.**

- 2. Be a better parent if you have children. Many parents have told me that having a child is one of the most amazing things that has ever happened to them. If you have a child or children, think about how you can be a better parent to them. Raising a child is challenging at every stage of the child's life, with new things to learn and latest problems to conquer, but that's also part of the joy of being a parent.**

**Quotation. "One may no more live in the world without picking up the moral prejudices of the world than one will be able to go to Hell without perspiring." H.L. Mencken (1880-1956)**

-----

**Tuesday of the First Week of Lent. - February 24.**

**Isaiah 55:10-11 – Lips moistened by rain/Soaking and germinating/Truth becomes a river.**

**Matthew 6:7-15 – Machine gun of words/Head must sink into the heart/Prayer soars from within.**

**Prayer: Our Father, words from the heart mean more than a thousand words that fail to reach the point of our center and stillness.**

**Coping with stress: Avoid procrastination – do it today, not tomorrow.**

**Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:**

- 1. Be a better employee if you work for someone. Often, I hear people complaining about how their companies are not giving them enough benefits/wages/support/etc. While this may be true, think about how you can be a better employee. Check if there is anything more you can do for your manager. See if there are any new projects you can take on. See how you can improve your current performance.**

- 2. Be a better manager/leader if you are managing others. Many people leave their jobs because they are unhappy with their managers. How well you manage your employees can dramatically affect their motivation level and performance. Put their needs before yours and bring the best out of them.**

**Quotation. “Sometimes prejudice is like a hair across your cheek. You cannot see it, you cannot find it with your fingers, but you keep brushing at it because the feel of it is irritating.” Marian Anderson (1897-1993)**

### **Wednesday of the First Week of Lent. - February 25.**

**Jonah 3:1-10 – Pagans ponder God/Enter, reluctant prophet/Sin city repents.**

**Luke 11:29-32 – The godless heroes/The Son of man comes, they cheer/Pharisees just jeer.**

**Prayer – God, place your love upon my burdened heart. Crack it open and embrace us with your love.**

**Coping with stress: Plan ahead – do not let gas tank below one-quarter full. During winter, maintain a full tank of gas.**

**Two Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:**

- 1. Be a better member of your community. What communities are you a part of? Say, interest groups? Recreational clubs? How can you be a more active member of these communities?**

2. **Be a better human to others. How can you treat the fellow humans around you better? Start treating them this way.**

**Quotation. “Prejudice blinds, ignorance retards, indifference deafens, and hate amputates. In this way, some people disable their souls.” Mary Robinson (1944-)**

---

### **Thursday of the First Week of Lent. - February 26.**

**Esther 12:14-16, 23-25 – A godly woman/Pleads mercy for her people/A kingly heart hears.**

**Matthew 7:7-12 – Ask, seek, knock, enter/God already knows our needs/Prayer is His answer.**

**Prayer – I stand humbly in your presence. My heart speaks to your heart in songs of praise and thanksgiving.**

**Coping with stress: Do not postpone items that need attention –change light bulbs, windshield wipers, doors need oiling, and the list is endless.**

**Two Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:**

1. **Be Accepting of differences — be it of people, mindsets, lifestyles, or cultures. For they add variety and color to our lives. If everyone is the same, life will be bland — monotonous, even.**
2. **Be Able. Your skills are like tools in your toolbox — when you equip yourself with more skills, you become more able to add value and contribute to others and society.**
  - **Learn something new. No matter how much you know, there are always new things to learn. The more you learn, the better you become.**

**Hone your current skills. Strengthen your current skills. You can never be too good at something — there’s always room to improve. Even the best people in their fields,**

such as Tiger Woods (Golf), Steve Curry (Basketball), and Beethoven (Pianist) never stopped honing their craft.

Quotation. "You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements." Norman Douglas (1868-1952)

---

### **Friday of the First Week of Lent. - February 27.**

Ezekiel 18:21-28 – To do what is right/To live freely and justly/God's joy is complete.

Matthew:20-26 – The letter can kill/While the spirit awakens/Love is the new law.

Prayer. Lord, you call me to be the most I can be in every moment of the day. Help me to come alive to the inner urgings of peace and justice.

Coping with stress: Arrive at least 15 minutes before appointments or one hour at the airport before domestic departures.

Two Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

1. Be Flexible. Have expectations and ideals but be flexible about them when needed. Not everyone can perform to realistic expectations and not every situation can happen perfectly. Learn when to be rigid in your ideals and when to be flexible.
2. Share a riddle with someone, more than likely you will get a chuckle. What do you call a nun who sleepwalks? Answer: A roman Catholic!

Quotation. "The country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in." Theodore Roosevelt (1858 – 1919)

---

### **Saturday of the First Week of Lent. - February 28.**

Deuteronomy 26:16-19 – God of covenant/You and I are empowered/A close encounter.

Matthew 5:43-48 - The impossible/Love, take it to the limit/Enemies are friends.

Prayer. God, the flow of your covenant love reaches into the fragmentary pieces of my brokenness. Gently, heal my shattered heart.

Coping with stress: Be prepared to wait. Reading material or games on the cell phone can fill the time warp.

Two Good deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

1. Step out of your comfort zone. Are you sticking to the same routines and hiding behind a safety net? Step out and do something you have never done before. It will broaden your mind and make you a better person.
2. Be Altruistic. Always have the best intentions for others. Go for the highest good in everything you do, every decision you make, and every thought you have.

Quotation. "Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it." Arapaho Proverb

Amen.

**First Sunday of Lent**

**February 22, 2026**

**Thus, death came to all.**

**Became a living being.**

**Get away Satan!**

rvb.

Reading 1

[Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7](#)

**The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.**

**Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made.

The serpent asked the woman,  
“Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?”

The woman answered the serpent:  
“We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.’”

But the serpent said to the woman:  
“You certainly will not die!  
No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil.”

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

### **A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

The initial verses 7-9 of Genesis, authored by the Yahwist tradition around 950 BCE, portray a very anthropomorphic God. He breathes his life-giving spirit into us as the wind fills the sails of a clipper ship. While we are God-like, we are not God for we have been taken from the earth. We are limited, vulnerable, and capable of becoming egocentric gods and choosing not to belong to God.

Personally, one of my favorite and more intimate examples of the presence of God's breath is in Job 27:3 – "As long as I have breath in my body and God's Spirit is in my nostrils," all is well. The verse in Job highlights the significance of life and the breath that we take daily. Job declares that his breath is in him and acknowledges that it comes from the Spirit of God. This very breath is an acknowledgment of life itself and all the existence that accompanies it. It serves as a reminder that we are utterly dependent on God for our existence. Our very being is a divine gift, illustrating God's creation and sustaining presence in our lives. In life, we often forget that every breath we take is a direct gift from God. Job's declaration shows a deep understanding of this truth.

When we read this scripture, we realize the importance of acknowledging God in our daily lives. Job's declaration is a testament to how we tend to underestimate the value of our own lives and the breath we have. His words remind us that, even in moments of pain and suffering, we still possess the life and spirit given by God. This assurance should instill hope and confidence in our hearts. Life, despite its challenges, becomes an opportunity to glorify God through our existence. Each day we wake up,

**we should remember this profound truth; that we are alive because God breathed His spirit into us.**

**In the context of the Book of Job, we see a man who has faced immense suffering and loss. Job lost his wealth, health, and his family's support. Despite enduring such tragic events, he maintained his faith and trust in God. This verse is a crucial statement of his resilience. Job is asserting that if he has breath, he will cling to his belief in God's righteousness. The struggles faced by Job provide a backdrop of perseverance in faith even during the darkest times. His declaration serves as a profound message to us all.**

**Secondly, we have a description of the nature of the "garden of delights" as symbolic of the kingdom during the reign of David and Solomon when the people of God had reached the apex of their kingdom.**

**"Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow  
that were delightful to look at and good for food,  
with the tree of life in the middle of the garden  
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."**

**The garden of delights is filled with all sorts of temptations luring us outside the limits of God's goodness and garden of earthly delights. The**

snake is symbolic of temptation, that of the Canaanites and their sexual fertility rites which were attractive to the Israelites. Eating the fruit indicated that some evil action had happened. Nakedness connotes self-alienation and vulnerability. As the story unfolds in verses 8-24, the nature of temptation and sin manifest a whirlpool effect, pulling into its vortex, alienation from self, others, nature, and God. Let us keep our eyes riveted on our Creator. Temptations will persist to pull and tug at our God-consciousness, attempting to suck us into an ego-centric way of being and living.

---

#### Responsorial Psalm

[Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17](#)

R. (cf. 3a) **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

For I acknowledge my offense,  
and my sin is before me always:  
“Against you only have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight.”

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

A clean heart create for me, O God,  
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out from your presence,  
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.  
Give me back the joy of your salvation,  
and a willing spirit sustain in me.  
O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.  
R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

## Reading 2

[Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Through one man sin entered the world,  
and through sin, death,  
and thus death came to all men, since all sinned.

For if, by the transgression of the one,  
death came to reign through that one,  
how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace  
and of the gift of justification  
come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, just as through one transgression  
condemnation came upon all,  
so, through one righteous act,  
acquittal and life came to all.

For just as through the disobedience of the one man  
the many were made sinners,  
so, through the obedience of the one,  
the many will be made righteous.

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

Romans 5 is a classic theological exposé which penetrates the heart of our human condition – “Just as through one man’s disobedience all became sinners, so through one man’s obedience all shall become just.” Paul stresses the “trinitarian” movement of God’s love and His spiritual

**breath filling us with justification, sanctification, and glorification. The death of Jesus overcomes and limits the influence of sin. Sin is a false value and pursuit, a power which enslaves us, and makes us less than human by the vices that we wallow in within the depths of our soul as expressed by a letter I sent to our Congressman, Tony Wied:**

**“This exercise will stare you in the face, rattle your conscience, and bring you to your knees asking your constituents for forgiveness and mercy.**

**Vices – A through Z – I have identified 115 vices (unethical and amoral) that could tempt and infect the hearts, minds, and souls of each one of us. Let this be an examination of conscience for those whom we have elected, who have sworn an oath to protect the Constitution and our Democracy, and to protect and safeguard the well-being of your constituents, for it is “In God We Trust.”**

**Acquisitive, avaricious, base, beguile, bellicose, belittle, belligerent, betray, bias, bigot, brutal, bully, callous, corruption, chauvinistic, cheat, chicanery, covetous, crafty, cruel, cunning, deceive, defraud, delude, discourteous, dishonest, disingenuous, disloyal, disrespectful, deceitful, domineering, dupe, duplicitous, egocentricity, egotism, ethnocentricity, extortion, false friend, fanatic, favoritism, fraud, grasping, greedy, grudge, hateful, heartless, hypocritical, ignoble, ill-mannered, impatience, inhuman, impatience, inconsiderate, insincere, insensitive, inside trading, intimidate, intolerance, lying, lying under**

**oath, malice, malevolence, mean, menace, merciless, money making violations, murder, narrow-minded, oppress, pettiness, pitiless, prejudice, pugnacious, quarrelsome, racism, rancor, rape, rationalize, rude, ruthless, self-aggrandizement, self-centered, self-conceit, self-deception, self-indulgence, self-opinionated, selfish, sexism, sex-trafficking, slavery, sly, small-mindedness, social contradiction, socio-centricity, spite, spiteful, swindle, terrorize, thoughtless, torture, trickery, tyrannize, uncivil, unfair, unkind, untruth, vested interest, vengeful, vindictive, violence, violent, wily, x-rated, yes-person, zealot.**

**May you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle examine your conscience, and strive to live the virtuous life, giving glory to God and being a model, mediator, and messenger of your solemn oath you made to the Constitution assuring us of our rights, freedoms, and privileges as citizens of the United States of America.**

**During this forthcoming Lenten season, it is time to for a change of heart, and to take an inventory of our vices and immoral lapses which weaken and rot the very fabric of our Democracy and our Constitutional rights and freedoms. “For the time is always right to do what is right.”  
– Martin Luther King Jr.**

**Verse Before the Gospel**

**[Matthew 4:4b](#)**

**One does not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.**

**Gospel**

**[Matthew 4:1-11](#)**

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him,

“If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.”

He said in reply,

“It is written:

*One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”*

Then the devil took him to the holy city,

and made him stand on the parapet of the temple,

and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.

For it is written:

*He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”*

Jesus answered him,

“Again it is written,

*You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.”*

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain,

and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence,

and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.”

At this, Jesus said to him,

“Get away, Satan!

It is written:

*The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.”*

Then the devil left him and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

**We are certainly familiar with the dynamics and outcome of the three temptations of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus accomplishes what the Israelites fail to do, that is to keep their eyes fixed on their maker, nourisher, and protector. The first temptation is based on Deuteronomy 8:3 and Exodus 16:1-15. The Israelites mumble and grumble until they are fed. Jesus is tempted to misuse his power, to have a divided heart and to manipulate his Father. The second temptation grows out of Deuteronomy 6:16 and Exodus 17:1-7 as water flowed from the rock, Jesus is faced with a conflict of interests: duty to his ministry or duty to his family (Luke 2:48-49 and Mark 3:31). Who is Jesus' rock of salvation? The third temptation is inspired by Deuteronomy 6:13 which is to pursue the path of idolatry. Jesus chooses to cast aside such fleeting and temporary urges and desires. It is comforting to know that Jesus realizes and accepts his humanity as an integral part of his divinity.**

**There is a famous engraving created by Albrecht Durer completed in 1513 entitled, "Knight, Death, the Devil." The engraving features a knight in full armor riding through a dark, rugged landscape, accompanied by a dog, with Death and the Devil flanking him by "tempting powers" that would quickly knock him off his horse.**

**This composition invites viewers to contemplate the struggles of life, the inevitability of death, and the moral choices one must make. The devil lurks about seeking to catch him off guard. The knight is impervious to death and the Devil. He does not raise his weapons to defend himself. The Knight focuses on the Lord realizing He does all the rest. The knight is a representation of courage and faith amid the looming threats of evil and death. This composition invites us to contemplate the struggles of life, the inevitability of death, and the moral choices we must make daily.**

**Final prayer:** Creator God, with your breath you gently shape, form, and give us life. In our moments of temptation may we remember who we are, being made in your image and likeness. May we not stray from your presence by being attracted to the fleeting lures of life. Amen.

**Blessings on you and your loved ones. Roger J. Vanden Busch.**