

Reader's notes

*'IN THE SCRIPTURES,
BY THE SPIRIT,
MAY WE SEE THE SAVIOURS FACE,
HEAR HIS WORD AND
HEED HIS CALLING,
KNOW HIS LOVE AND
GROW IN GRACE.'*

1st Sunday of Lent Year A

Readings

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/readings/?feature=sunday>

*The link to the readings is a temporary one, it will bring you to the correct readings **only** for the week leading up to the Sunday in question. (its a copyright thing)*

Notes: <https://www.tarsus.ie/page-72/page-86/>

The Gospel :

MT 4:1-11

Saint Matthew describes Jesus' temptations after his baptism in ways that remind his Jewish Christian audience of their Exodus experience and first covenant with God.

First Reading,

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

It's Lent, originally the season when those about to be baptised repented their lives of sin and sought to know the Lord Jesus more intimately. Then Lent became a season for the baptised to do the same. We search ourselves honestly, and pray earnestly, to know where we must become open to God's grace of ongoing conversion. The church begins the season with a reflection on the origins of sin among us. Good preparation for the lector would be to read [all of chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis](#), not just the selected verses in the Lectionary.

A Theological Conjecture: There are many ways to interpret this oft-told story. The pivot is the "Original Temptation": "You will be like gods, knowing what is good and what is evil." Our trying to become gods upsets our relationship with the only real God, and brings a great imbalance into our relations with everyone else, to whom, of course, we don't grant divine standing.

Proclaiming It: Tell this as a story. Emphasise the serpent's words in your proclamation. Make it sound cunningly attractive to become like gods. In any case, tell the story **as if you're an observer at the creation**, one who has never heard the story. Let the assembly share your amazement when you say, "and so man became a living being," because you've never seen anything like this. The garden, as you describe it,

should delight your hearers, and they should almost taste the foods that they envision. When you describe the serpent, make him seem attractive, but sound a little suspicious.

Now the **climax** sounds deceptively simple, But there is a ton of theological and psychological implication in "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked." Everything has suddenly changed for humankind. Let the lector make it sound momentous and tragic.

First Reading,

Romans 5:12-19

The Theological Background: Romans is a complex letter in which Saint Paul works out a number of questions. His major theme is that it's Christ who grants us a right relationship with God. That justification, to use Paul's term, is not our doing, but comes to us as undeserved grace, to which we become open by our faith in Christ. Throughout, Paul **contrasts** faith in Christ with every other possible stance of humanity before God.

Proclaiming It: Contrasts mark today's sentences, too. Let's look at this challenging passage sentence by sentence, and identify the contrasting elements.

- The one man through whom sin and death entered the world is Adam (and Christ will be described as a new Adam, founder of a renewed humanity).
- Sin remained in the world, but there was no law to define it or hold anyone to account for it.
- The law (meaning the covenant God struck with the people of Israel in Moses' time) was a good thing, for how it civilised the people. But no one could keep it completely, so they stood convicted of their sins by the law.
- What is this gift that is unlike the transgression of Adam? It is God's gracious gift of redemption given in Jesus.
- How is the gift different from the result that prevailed after Adam's sin? One sin brought many condemnations; now one gift brings many acquittals.
- As the disobedience of Adam brought death, we now come to reign in life through Jesus.

As if to make sure we get this subtlety, Paul repeats himself in the last few sentences. This makes this one of the rare occasions when I would consider using the short form of the reading. Confer with the preacher before deciding.

Next Readers Session: March 25th 11 am