

# *Dominica I Quadragesimae* A

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Lectio Divina by Fr. Randy Soto

## I. Lectio

A. The second account of Creation (Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7) constitutes our first reading. In a picturesque fashion the author presents God creating Adam. Like a potter, God creates our first parent by modeling him out of clay and by giving him the vitality of his breath. *"The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground."* We also read how God placed him in the Garden of Eden to live in harmony and peace. God also gave man the gift of freedom, for only in freedom man can love back his Creator. Freedom meant to have the right to say yes or no to God's plan. Along with that freedom, man was given the mandate to eat from any tree but from two: the Tree of Life and the Tree of knowledge. The Serpent seduces Eve and Adam to eat from the forbidden trees (Temptation); and they chose to eat (Freedom). Now we must live up to the consequences of our actions.

B. Following David's lead, the whole community acknowledges the sinful condition of our existence (Ps 51) and pleads for God's mercy and compassion *"Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned."*

C. In the Second Reading, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we all have sinned; that there is no difference between Gentile and Jew for that matter. We are all in desperate need of God's grace and benevolence. *"Through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."* Paul assured the Romans that Salvation is given us gratuitously, so there is nothing to fear.

D. In the region of *Jebel Qarantal* across from the Jericho, and upon a dry weary mount, Matthew narrates the Temptations of Jesus Christ. *"Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."* Three temptations and only one purpose: to make Jesus deviate from God's plan of Salvation. Jesus, however, did not come to solve fundamental physical needs, like hunger, but to proclaim the God's Word which is alive and eternal (1<sup>st</sup> Temptation). In the same way, Jesus did not come to call disciples by inadequate or mysterious means (2<sup>nd</sup> Temptation). Finally, Jesus did not come to rule the world as men do: appealing to force and riches (3<sup>rd</sup> Temptation). Jesus overcomes the three Temptations by doing exactly the opposite of what Satan offered him: to the Temptation of quenching hunger and thirst, Jesus fasted (**Fasting**); to the Temptation of showing off God's power in him, Jesus prayed for humility and subjection to his Father's plan (**Prayer**); and to the Temptation of being rich, powerful and famous, Jesus gave everything he was and had as an act of sublime love for us (**Almsgiving**).

## III. Meditatio

A. Today's Liturgy of the Word makes us go back in time to realize that sin has been part of our nature right from the first moment of our human existence. God in his infinite wisdom created us to give him Glory and love him and to love each other. In order to do that he gave us freedom. Only in freedom love can be exercised and

experienced. God knew all along that there was that chance for us to say **NO** to his free given love, but nonetheless he took his chances with us. And yes, the cruel reality is only one: we said no to God.

B. God is not happy to see us fallen and left to our own fate. That is why He established a plan in which at the appointed time (*Kairós*) we were all restored to that primeval estate of harmony and love with our Maker. That *Kairós* began with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, who reshaped our “clay” by becoming “clay” himself and uniting it with his Divine Nature.

C. Christ has become a model for us in that he is the perfect man; the epitome of all we would want to be: perfect, wise, beautiful, loving and caring and at peace. But in order to be like him we must accept his invitation to repent and to turn to him.

D. Christ is aware that during this process we are going to be tempted like him. So he calls us to imitate him all the more in defeating temptations through the powerful weapons of **fasting, prayer and almsgiving**. Then, freed from all corruption and strengthened by his grace we shall be able to ascend Mount Sion to see the Glory of His Resurrection on Easter morning.

### III. Oratio

Our Lenten Pilgrimage began last Wednesday with the imposition of the ashes. This rite opened the way to conversion and invited us to walk in that way with an open heart to the Lord; for He is the one leading us into the desert of his love “*When he calls to me, I will answer; I will rescue him and give him honor. Long life and contentment will be his*” (Introit); the opening prayers singles out the purpose of our Lenten exercises “*help us to understand the meaning of your Son’s death and resurrection, and teach us to reflect it in our lives.*” (OP); the Offertory asks the Lord to change our lives in order to participate of the Great Feast of Easter (PG). Today’s preface helps us to see the importance of this Sunday Liturgy of the Word as we begin our pilgrimage: “*By rejecting the devil’s temptations he has taught us to rid ourselves of the hidden corruption of evil, and so to share his paschal meal in purity of heart, until we come to its fulfillment in the Promised Land of heaven*” (Preface). During Communion, as we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, we pray that God may “*increase our faith and hope, and deepen our love in this communion; to help us to live by his words and to seek Christ, our bread of life*” (CA). We conclude our celebration with a Solemn Blessing: “*The Father of mercies has given us an example of unselfish love in the sufferings of his only Son. Through your service of God and neighbor may you receive his countless blessings. Amen. You believe that by his dying Christ destroyed death for ever. May he give you everlasting life. Amen. He humbled himself for our sakes. May you follow his example and share in his resurrection. Amen.*”

### III. Contemplatio

A. *Ah, my Redeemer how have I been able hitherto to live in such forgetfulness of You? You were prepared to grant me all the graces that I should ask of you; you only waited for me to ask them. But I have thought only of indulging my senses, and have been indifferent about the privation and loss of your love and of your grace. Lord forget all my ingratitude, and have mercy on me. Pardon me all the displeasure I have given you, and grant me perseverance. O God of my soul give me the grace always to ask your aid not to offend you. Do not permit me to be, as I have hitherto been, negligent in the performance of this duty. Grant me light and strength always to recommend myself to you, and particularly when my enemies tempt me to offend you again. Grant, O my God this grace through the merits of Jesus Christ, and through the love which you bear to him. O Lord I have offended you enough. I wish to love you during the remainder of my life. Give me your love; and may this love remind me to ask your aid whenever I am in danger of losing you by sin. Mary, my hope after Jesus through your intercession I hope for the grace to recommend myself in all my temptations to you and to your Son. Hear me, O my Queen, through the love which you bear to Jesus Christ (Teresa of Avila)*

B. The following is a synopsis of readings of the first part of Lent. It is intended to help us contemplate God's word in this cycle A.

#### *Lenten Pilgrimage in Cycle A*

I Lent	1 <sup>st</sup>	Creation and Sin	<b>Creation and Sin</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Universality of Sin	
	Gospel	Temptations of Jesus	
II Lent	1 <sup>st</sup>	Vocation of Abraham	<b>In Abraham called to be God's People</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	We are called from all eternity	
	Gospel	Transfiguration of Jesus	
III Lent	1 <sup>st</sup>	Water in the Desert	<b>Baptism is the water of life eternal</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	The Holy Spirit poured out into our hearts	
	Gospel	The Living waters of Jesus (Samaritan Woman)	
IV Lent	1 <sup>st</sup>	Election and Anointing of David	<b>Rejoice, for we are called to be Children of the light</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	The chosen ones must walk as children of the light	
	Gospel	Jesus heals the man born blind	
V Lent	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dry bones come back to life by the Spirit of YHWH	<b>Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life</b>
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	The Holy Spirit lives within us	
	Gospel	Lazarus comes back to life	