

Sunday and Feast Day Liturgical Notes for Priests and Deacons

Suggestions for Leading Worship



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RE: Liturgical Suggestions for the First Sunday of Lent – Cycle A

Sunday or Feast Day date: February 9-10, 2008

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

An Overview...

In our Church the overriding message of Lent each year is repentance and renewal. Although penitential in nature, the Church emphasizes that Lent is a period of joyful renewal when we renew our hearts and minds to enter into the Paschal Mystery. Each year the Gospel of the First Sunday of Lent recounts the temptation of Jesus in the desert. This year, we hear from Matthew, who tells us Jesus was led into the desert where He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. The spirit takes Him there after His baptism by John but before He begins His public ministry. It is important to note that this time of prayer and fasting in the desert was a time when Jesus was able to come face to face with who He was. It was then that He was able to conquer the temptations of the devil. This fast, this getting away amid the desolation of the desert, is the model for our Lenten season. Lent – with its fasting, prayer and almsgiving – serves as our preparation for the renewal of our own Baptismal call and mission. It is time for each of us to enter into our own desert, to slow down and contemplate who we are in Christ.

The character of Lent is best created by the presence of the unbaptized catechumens and baptized candidates. This Sunday we celebrate the “Rite of Sending” to the “Rite of Election,” which is the parish’s way of witnessing to the catechumens and candidates their connection to the larger church. We “send” them to the Cathedral to be recognized by the bishop and where they will be-

come the “elect” of God, the final stage of preparation for their reception into the Church at the great Easter Vigil. The Rite of Sending generally takes place during one of the parish Masses on the First Sunday of Lent.

Some Considerations as You Prepare...

1. Praying the *Confiteor* (Penitential Rite option A) is a good selection for a penitential rite for the entire Lenten season. You may even invite the assembly to kneel to emphasize the penitential nature of the season. Follow it with a Greek *Kyrie elesion* or the Lord, have mercy. You may also choose forms B or C of the Penitential Rite.
2. The *Gloria* is omitted during Lent except on the Solemnity of St. Joseph.
3. The first Opening prayer is recommended.
4. The Alleluia is omitted during Lent – even on the Solemnity of St. Joseph. The Gospel Acclamation uses other words of praise.
5. There is a proper (i.e., mandatory) Preface for the First Sunday of Lent, which makes reference to Jesus’ time in the desert.
6. The Solemn Blessing of the Passion of the Lord could be used today and for all the Sundays of Lent.
7. February 11 is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and so is annually designated as World Day of the Sick. You may consider offering the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick during your Masses, or at the least include an intercessory prayer for the sick.

Questions for reflection and sharing...

1. What do you need to learn about yourself based on how you are tempted?
2. How do the Lenten practices you have chosen connect to your baptismal commitment? How do they help you to love God single heartedly?
3. What in your household will say “we are observing the solemn season of Lent”?

Suggested Prayers of the Faithful for the First Sunday of Lent:

Priest: Baptized into the paschal mystery of Jesus and led by the Spirit, let us offer our prayer to God with confidence and trust.

Deacon (or if there is no deacon, another reader):

1. That we who follow Adam and Eve may long only for the tree which gives us life: the cross of Christ. We pray to the Lord.
2. For all who await the bread of life, for those who suffer in hunger for food or for faith. We pray to the Lord.
3. For each of us here today as we face daily temptations to seek our own comfort first and to crave power and influence over others. We pray to the Lord.
4. For the (adult and children) catechumens and candidates who are being sent to the bishop for recognition this weekend. May they be led by the Spirit into a Lenten desert and experience Christ's victory as their own. We pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, for those preparing to die, for all who keep watch with the dying and for all who have died [especially (names)]. We pray to the Lord.
6. In silence we lift up the prayers of our hearts . . .

[pause; the presider alone concludes]

Priest: Gracious God, you neither slumber nor sleep.
You are with us to the end of our days.
Give us strength when we falter and mercy when we fall.
We ask this in the name of Jesus.
Amen.