

Another Step

During the week, prepare a sacred space in your home. Set out a purple cloth, a votive candle, and some sand. Take some intentional time to move more deeply into the scripture passages for this First Sunday in Lent (see p. 1). Through the week, use the image of the solitary figure in *The Temptation in the Wilderness* to explore your own spirituality. Run your fingers through the sand. Feel its texture and imagine it spread around as far as the eye can see.

- How would it feel to you to fast one day a week during these next six weeks and dedicate the money you would have used for your meals to those who are chronically hungry, or to a project that provides clean water for those without it?
- Reflect on the quotation at the top of page 1; then rewrite Matthew 4:3, 5-6, 8-9 in your own words, substituting temptations in your own life, and the responses you would like to make.

Lent 1: Sand

Matthew 4:1-11

Additional passages:

Genesis 2:15-17; Genesis 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19

With a power given from above we shout, "No!" to him who promises the whole world if we will only worship him. We crucify the old mechanisms of power – push, drive, climb, grasp, trample.

We turn instead to the new life of power, love, joy, peace and patience, and all the fruit of the Spirit.

– Richard Foster

Gather & Center

Prepare the worship table with a purple tablecloth, a votive candle, matches, and a large shallow bowl filled with sand. Scatter some sand on the purple tablecloth to add texture. When everyone is gathered, take time to welcome and introduce one another. Watch the Introduction segment of the video and pause for any questions. Finally, light the candle and start the Lent 1 segment of the video, joining in the following prayer. Pause the video as directed or whenever you wish to take time for discussion.

Holy Spirit, lead me
where creation is unformed into dust,
where soul-breath trembles into stillness,
where word waits unspoken in utter silence.
Lead me from the temptation
to avoid the time of trial,
to stand silent in the time of injustice,
to forget the sacrifice of mercy.
Holy Spirit, lead.

Enter & Engage

Before restarting the video, read aloud Matthew 4:1-11. Pause the video for discussion as you wish.

Ask Yourself

Use these questions and suggestions to invite discussion, prayer, and reflection.

1. Read Genesis 2:15-17 and then think about the temptations in Matthew 4:3, 5-6, 8-9. How can we be sure about what is good and what is evil? How do you discern what is “right” in complex situations when the choice is between good and better (or bad and worse)?
2. Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights. From what might you want to fast during Lent? Is there a pattern or behavior in your life that takes time and energy from faithful discipleship? How could you re-channel that time and energy more fruitfully?
3. Read two or three different versions of Matthew 4:1-11 (such as *The Message*, the NRSV, and the *Cottonpatch Version*). Note differences in words and tone. What catches your attention? Is there a phrase or word that sparks new ideas or opens up new meaning for you? Consider writing this whole text in your own words, substituting temptations you face in your own life.

4. Richard Foster speaks of the “old mechanisms of power” (see p. 1). Where do you see these in your life? In the life of your faith community? In your town, state, or nation? In the world? Have you recently said, “No” to one of them? Which one? Do you want to say “No,” to one? What is stopping you? What would strengthen you?
5. Read aloud Psalm 32. Say again the words of verse 3. Have you ever kept silence and felt as if your “strength was dried up”? Jesus did not keep silence in the face of Satan’s temptations. Is there a place where you need to break the silence?

Ponder & Pray

Gather near the worship table. Spend a moment in silence as you take leave of the image *The Temptation in the Wilderness*. Then say the following prayer in unison.

Holy Spirit, lead me to fast
from violence,
from greed,
from self-righteousness.
Lead me to thirst
for a generous heart,
for a courageous hope,
for a transformed soul.
Holy Spirit, lead.