



THE SAVING WORD

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT / A

22 FEBRUARY 2026

FIRST READING

Gen 2:7-9; 3:1-7

A reading from the book of Genesis

Creation of our first parents, and sin.

The Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being.

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. The Lord God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden.

The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?' The woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death."' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.' The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PSALM

Ps 50:3-6, 12-14, 17. R. v. 3

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

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. / In your compassion blot out my offence. / O wash me more and more from my guilt / and cleanse me from my sin. **R.**

2. My offences truly I know them; / my sin is always before me. / Against you, you alone



have I sinned; / what is evil in your sight I have done. **R.**

3. A pure heart create for me, O God, / put a steadfast spirit within me. / Do not cast me away from your presence, / nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **R.**

4. Give me again the joy of your help; / with a spirit of fervour sustain me. / O Lord, open my lips / and my mouth shall declare your praise. **R.**

SECOND READING

Rom 5:12, 17-19.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

Where sin increased, there grace abounded all the more.

Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned.

If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

■ The word of the Lord.

Longer form 5:12-19



The Parish of St Joseph's, Elsternwick & Holy Cross, Caulfield South
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PARISH PRIEST: Rev Fr Leenus Neetany SAC

Permanent Deacon: Rev John Lam
Parish Coordinator: Joanna Lam

ST JOSEPH'S, ELSTERNWICK

71 Orrong Road, Elsternwick 3185

Mass

Friday 10:00am, Saturday 6:30pm and Sunday 10:30am

Reconciliation

Friday after Mass, Saturday 6:00pm

HOLY CROSS, CAULFIELD SOUTH

707 Glen Huntly Road, Caulfield South 3162

Mass

Thursday 10:00am and Sunday 9:00am

Reconciliation

Thursday after Mass

ST ANTHONY'S, GLEN HUNTLY

74, Grange Road, Glen Huntly 3163

In Residence: Fr Pat Jackson SAC, Br Lindsay Rust SAC

Mass

Monday - Saturday 9:15am

Saturday 6:00pm

Sunday 9:00am, 11:00am, 5:00pm

Reconciliation

30-mins before all Masses & Saturday 9:45-10:10am

Thanksgiving & Special Collections

Church: TBA Presbytery: TBA

Special Collection: -

Next Week's Roster

Lectors:

Saturday 6:30pm Young Adults

Sunday 9:00am D Sarah 10:30am E Zheng

Counters: M Beaumont & E Ambrose

Upcoming Week's Liturgical Calendar

Sun 29 Feb: 2nd Sunday of Lent

Thanksgiving



Stations of the Cross in Lent after Mass

Holy Cross on Thursdays after 10:00am Mass.

St Joseph's on Fridays after 10:00am Mass.

St Anthony's on Fridays after 9:15am & 7:00pm



Lenten Scripture Reflection

Starting on Monday 23 February, and every Monday thereafter, during Lent from 7-8pm at St Anthony's Church. All welcome!



Morning Retreat with Mary

Led by Fr Peter Ferwerda at St Anthony's, Glen Huntly on Monday 23 February.

Holy Mass at 9:15am. Confession, Cenacle Rosary, Reflection and Eucharistic Adoration followed by refreshments (tea and coffee).

For more information, email or ring the Parish Office. All welcome!

Project Compassion

Project Compassion Boxes are now available in the church foyers. Please take one as well as for anyone who is unable to come to church.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (cf. Ps 90:15-16)

When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (Mt 4:4)

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

PLEASE PRAY FOR

Those who are ill*: Chris Antony

**Names are published for a month, unless further requested.*

Recently Deceased: Margaret Tighe, Michael McQuillen

Death Anniversary: -

Mrs Margaret Tighe

16 January 1932 - 15 February 2026

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Mrs Margaret Tighe, age 94, who has valiantly led the pro-life movement in Australia for over 60 years.

May the Right To Life Australia Inc. and all pro-life supporters keep up their good works! May Her Soul Rest In Peace!



Lenten Eucharistic Adoration Challenge



31 days of Eucharistic Adoration by visiting any Church where there is Blessed Sacrament Exposition or an Adoration Chapel. The Challenge starts on Ash Wednesday, 18th February and ends on Friday, 20th March 2026.

Suggested locations:

1. Perpetual Adoration Chapel at St Joseph's, Elsternwick.
2. St Francis Church, Melbourne CBD.

For more info, email angelica.barrios.au@gmail.com or the Parish Office. Pamphlets available in the Church foyer.

Perpetual Adoration Chapel

The Adoration Chapel was built in 2018 to commemorate the Centenary Celebration of St Joseph's Church. The Chapel can be accessed 24/7 with a security tag. Contact the Parish Office to apply. A refundable deposit of \$100 will be required upon application.



Please keep in our thoughts and prayers, our RCIA Candidates and Catechumens as they proceed to the Rite of Election at the Cathedral this Sunday, 22nd February 2026.

Youth & Young Adults Hosting Mass - 28 February

The Young Adults and Youth from our 3 churches will be hosting next weekend's Vigil Mass. This is an initiative from the Young Adults' Group to host the 6:30pm Saturday Vigil Mass on the 4th Saturday of every month at St Joseph's Church.



There will be a light supper for the Youth and Young Adults after Mass at St Joseph's Presbytery. This will be followed by fellowship and a talk by Jeff Vlahovich, our Pastoral Council Chair, on the topic "Science vs God".

Please encourage the youth and young people of St Joseph's & Holy Cross and St Anthony's to attend.

Pope’s Lenten message: Abstain from harsh words and rash judgement

“I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor.”

Pope Leo XIV made that invitation at the heart of his message for Lent 2026, which was released on Friday.

As Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18, the Pope said this liturgical season offers Christians an opportunity to place the mystery of God back at the center of our lives.

Every journey of conversion, he said, begins by letting God’s word touch our hearts, so that we may renew our commitment to follow Christ in the mystery of His saving passion, death, and resurrection.

Pope Leo focused on the importance of listening to God and to those around us, allowing ourselves to enter into authentic relationships.

“In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society,” he said, “Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering.”

Christians, said the Pope, can cultivate inner openness to listening, as God does, by growing in awareness that the poor challenge our lives and economic systems, as well as the Church.

Pope Leo XIV then turned to how fasting helps open us to the deep desire for justice, which he said frees us from complacency.

“Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we ‘hunger’ for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance,” he said. “Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our ‘appetites,’ keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive”.

Fasting, he added, teaches us to govern our desire by purifying, freeing, and expanding it, in order to direct our desire toward God and good deeds.

However, we must fast in faith, humility, and communion with the Lord, and not in a way that leads to pride, said the Pope, adding that other forms of self-denial also lead to a more sober lifestyle.

Pope Leo then pointed to an under-appreciated form of abstinence, which is refraining from hurtful words.

“Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves,” he said. “Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities.”

If we do so, we will let words of hatred “give way to words of hope and peace.”

Pope Leo went on to emphasize the communal aspect of listening and fasting, which can be lived out in our parishes, families, and religious communities.

By listening to the cry of the poor and setting our hearts on a path of conversion to Christ, we train our conscience and improve the quality of our lives and relationships, he said.

“It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires—both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.”

Pope Leo XIV concluded his 2026 Lenten Message with a call for Christian communities to become places where those who suffer find welcome.

“Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language,” he said, “so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. *By Devin Watkins - Vatican News*

1st Sunday of Lent

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus,

The Temptations of Jesus can also be understood in the light of the theme ‘God with us’. Jesus is being tempted by Satan to stop being with us. Satan is trying to cut off Jesus’ relationship with God and people. He is suggesting to Jesus that Jesus should do everything by himself and for himself. All the three temptations are really about that. It is about leading a life without God. It is about going it all alone. All of us have an urge inside us which says, “Why don’t you go it alone? Be yourself.

In the case of Adam and Eve too, their problem was not about eating an apple. It was the little voice inside them that said “You can be like God. Break off the submissive relationship with God. Claim your autonomy. God is in your way. Get him out of the way. And eventually Adam and Eve gave in to that trap of Satan and fell.

In our case too, we easily give in to similar treacherous suggestions of satan and fall into sin. But Jesus when he was tempted he did not give in. He stood with his Father and with us. Jesus proved himself true to his name, Immanuel. God is with us.

Suppose, Jesus had given in!!! Suppose he yielded to the temptations and sinned, then it would have brought about for us unimaginable consequences. What would have been our fate then? But Jesus chose to stay close to his Father, and he chose to continue to be God with us. He did not forsake his Father; and he did not forsake His people. Not even for a moment would he choose to give us up.

Jesus is with us even in the most vulnerable moments of our lives. If we are tempted he is tempted too; If we are hungry, he is hungry too; If we are wounded, he is wounded too; If we are humiliated, rejected, hated and troubled, then he has experienced all these and more. The only difference is that we give into temptations and sin, but Jesus overcame all temptations and never ever sinned.

Therefore even in our most hopeless situations, we can learn to trust in his unseen but sure companionship. He is always there with us even when we cannot feel him. We can learn to live by every word that comes from the mouth of Our Lord, who says, ‘I am with you always’. During this season of Lent let us make an extra effort to be with Jesus, to stand by him, to live for him, just as he suffers to be with us.

Fr Leenus.

A mother was preparing pancakes for her young sons. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their Mother said: If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, "Let my brother have the first pancake." The oldest boy turned to his younger brother and said, "You be Jesus."

St Anthony’s Church open on Fridays during Lent

This initiative has a two-fold purpose:

To make the church available to more parishioners during Lent and to take a small step on the path of keeping the Church open for daily prayer.



Do you recall the days when our church was open every day? There is a need and a hunger in the community.

St Anthony’s is taking this step to meet it, starting Friday 27th February. If you are able to commit to a time of personal prayer and be present to keep an eye in the church on Friday afternoon, please contact the Parish Office.

Let’s Go Bowling

All welcome to come along this Sunday 22nd February. Leave from St Anthony’s Church at 1:10pm or meet at Zone Bowling, 1866 Princes Highway Service Road, Clayton. We are booking some lanes, first game is 1:45pm.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 4:4

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory! / No one lives on bread alone, / but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. / Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

GOSPEL

Mt 4:1-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus fasted for forty days and nights.

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says:

Man does not live on bread alone
but on every word that comes from the
mouth of God.'

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God' he said 'throw yourself down; for scripture says:

He will put you in his angels' charge,
and they will support you on their hands
in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says:

You must not put the Lord your God to the
test.'

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these,' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God,
and serve him alone.'

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word

SELF-CENTRED SEDUCTIONS

As is traditional on the First Sunday of Lent, the Gospel passage is about Jesus' temptation, an appropriate theme as we begin our own journey in Lent and begin to explore our own seductive temptations. We are all prone to these, and Matthew presents us with a Jesus similarly tested: an egoism exclusive of others especially God, the attraction to power and the seduction of wealth. These temptations are crafted in Old Testament terminology and imagery, particularly present in the Book of Deuteronomy, and ones that Israel experienced in the wilderness.

In today's story, Satan enters the scene, originally a member of the heavenly court (see Job) but, by the time of Matthew, God's adversary who tests the intention and fidelity of those who belong to God. Jesus is his target in three temptations. The first is about food and the temptation to break covenantal fidelity to God due to hunger. The second seeks to question Jesus' conviction of God's care of him. From the parapet of the temple, Jesus is told to throw himself from it, and test God's protection of him. In the third, with a vision of all the earth's kingdoms and seduction of wealth, Jesus is tempted to change his allegiance from God to Satan.

Matthew's point is quite clear writing to a Jewish audience most familiar with Israel's desert failures: Jesus is an authentic Jew who belongs to the Israelite people, knows and experiences their temptations, but resists the seduction of egoism, power and wealth in fidelity to God and his covenantal relationship. In this first week of Lent, today's Gospel invites us to reflect on those self-centred seductions that may compromise our true relationship to God.

Fr Michael Trainor