

February 26, 2023 — 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent**Readings**

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7a

Psalm 50 (51): 3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14.17

Romans 5:12, 17-19

Matthew 4:1-11

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”*

—Psalm 51:10

## Return to the Sources

In facing the challenges—and even the chaos—of life, **Lent** is a gift. It is a time of looking back and contemplation that allows a return to sources and preparation for renewal. It is a beautiful invitation to get back to the essentials and offer the best of oneself. It is also a call to penance, to prayer and to sharing.

On this first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel invites us to reflect on our own spiritual life and our calling to follow Jesus. We discover how Jesus resisted temptations in the desert while fasting for forty days and forty nights.

“Hunger is a good discipline,” Ernest Hemingway wrote. In the past, **fasting** was practiced to cope with waning winter reserves. Jesus followed the Holy Spirit into the desert to test his faith. Fasting also has therapeutic virtues. The body gets rid of the superfluous to make room for the essential. If fasting first sharpens—then calms—the senses, above all else it clears and strengthens the spirit.

Fasting and the desert also predispose us to silence and prepare us for **prayer** in order to (re)establish a sincere dialogue with the Creator in the silence of our hearts. If silence is golden, it is because it is rare and therefore precious. It is in silence that we can hear the song of the Earth and the cry of her children. It is in its eloquence that the answer to our questions is often revealed to us.

Taking advantage of this time to recognize our shortcoming and renounce sin, we would be better prepared to talk to God, to pray to Him and to ask Him in all humility: “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit” (Ps 51:12).

**Sharing** is an opportunity to welcome, appreciate and fulfill what is just and good. “... so one man’s [Jesus’s] act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.” (Rom 5:18). We can also *live simply so that others might simply live*. Just as a single candle is enough to light up the night, every hand extended, and every loaf shared contribute to the survival of others.

At Development and Peace — Caritas Canada, we believe that every person has value and that every gesture counts, even the smallest one. It is our duty to defend the rights and dignity of anyone who is deprived of them. And then, doesn’t the *salvation* of one person—as well as his or her survival—depend upon the salvation of every person? More than just Christian charity, this is what we call **human solidarity**.

This Lent, let’s **Stand for the Land** and its children who defend it and depend upon it. Our mission is to seize every opportunity to do Good: to invest our time, our money and our talents for the benefit of *she or he who comes*, of our neighbour in need.

Today’s readings help us to understand not only the importance of resisting temptations and being faithful to our spiritual calling, but also the importance of being faithful witnesses of God’s love and justice in the world.

*Let us remember that every child, woman and man who is full has, somewhere in the world, a sister or brother who is hungry, cold, and thirsty—for justice.*

Author: Philippe Lafortune, animator for Central and Southern Quebec, Development and Peace — Caritas Canada

