

Sunday, February 21

The first Sunday of Lent always focuses on Jesus' temptation in the desert. Temptations are a part of life, no matter how mature we are in our faith. No matter how spiritually mature you are you will be tempted. Temptation is not a sign of spiritual immaturity. It is a sign that you are human. The difference between spiritually immature people and spiritually mature people is that spiritually mature people know how they are tempted. They know the environments or situations or issues that tempt them and can lead them into sin.

When it comes to getting offended, we all have different ways in which we are tempted. What easily offends you will not easily offend me. A sensitive topic for me may not mean anything to you. To grow spiritually, we must become more aware of ourselves and what will lead us into feeling offended.

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Pray today for the grace to know yourself better. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the issues that tempt you into offense. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you knowledge, understanding, and wisdom about those issues.

Monday, February 22

At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.

—Mark 1:12–13a

Jesus was tempted even though he was following the direction of the Holy Spirit. He didn't get tempted because he was apart from God's will, but because he was in it. We should avoid situations that lead us into unnecessary temptation, but we will never be able to avoid temptation completely.

Inevitably, we will be offended by others and tempted to harbor the offense, internalize it, and allow it to live in our hearts. If we allow it in, we risk becoming entitled, bitter, and self-centered people. The fruit of living with an offended heart is never good.

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Pray today for the grace to recognize the temptation to harbor and nurture offense. Pray for a humble heart that is not so sensitive and easily offended.

Tuesday, February 23

This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.

—Mark 1:15

After Jesus is tempted in the desert, he announces his basic message: The kingdom of God is at hand. God's kingdom is not some faraway place but something we can experience in the here and now. God's kingdom is the place where God rules people's hearts and lives. To enter the kingdom, we simply need to repent and believe the Good News.

To repent means to turn away from whatever bad and unhealthy habits we have formed and turn back to God. To repent means to turn away from self-defeating behaviors and turn back to God's goodness and grace. We can repent of focusing on the offenses we have received and instead put our focus on the Good News of God's love for us.

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Take a moment to repent of any times you have harbored and held on to an offense. Tell God that you do not want it in your heart and confess your belief in the Good News of God's love.

Wednesday, February 24

This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the good news.
—Mark 1:15

Even if we allow offense into our hearts, we can choose to repent and believe in the Good News:

Repent of harboring offense and believe the Good News that Christ died for you.

Repent and believe the Good News that God is for you even when others are against you.

Repent and believe the Good News that even though others don't always treat you as you deserve, God has treated you better than you deserve—not counting your offenses against you but treating you with mercy and kindness.

Repent of your unrealistic expectations for others and believe the Good News that God can give us infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

Repent of your need for life to always be easy and getting offended when it's not and believe the Good News that God makes all things work together for your good.

Repent of the offense you take when the world doesn't revolve around you and believe the Good News that you get to live for God's eternal purposes.

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Take a look at the list above. Confess to God the ways you need to repent of any offense and replace it with the Good News of the Gospel.

Thursday, February 25

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil.

—Ephesians 4:26–27

Paul writes to the Ephesians to teach them about how to live in community with one another. He tells them that it is OK to be angry, but it is not OK to sin. They can get angry and still choose to avoid sin. He then says they should get rid of their anger quickly because anger gives the devil room to work in their lives.

When we get offended, it often turns to anger. If we do not deal with the anger of being offended, we give the devil and evil spirits room in our hearts to make us bitter, entitled, and self-centered. It is how marriages are destroyed and relationships are ended.

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Have you let the sun set on a past offense? Has it brought about bitterness? If so, repent of it. Ask God for his mercy and grace to bring healing to your heart.

Friday, February 26

All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. [And] be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.

—Ephesians 4:31–32

Paul continues to give wisdom to the Ephesians about how to build a healthy Christian community. He tells them to get rid of all bitterness, fury, anger, and shouting at one another. These are the natural reactions that come from being offended, but we shouldn't let them take root in our hearts. Instead, Paul offers an alternative to these reactions: he says to replace those actions with kindness and compassion and with forgiving one another as God has forgiven us. These are not our natural reactions to offenses, and nurturing them takes work, but they are a healthier response to offenses for both ourselves and others than our natural responses are.

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When we are offended, we can choose to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving, and we can choose not to nurture the offense. Pray today for the grace to extend kindness, compassion, and forgiveness—rather than anger or shouting—toward the people who offend you.

Saturday, February 27

Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.

Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

I will give you thanks with an upright heart,
when I have learned your just ordinances.

I will keep your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

SECOND WEEK
OF LENT

Sunday, February 28

While offenses are inevitable, we can choose how to handle them. Rather than nurturing an offense, we can handle it in a healthy way.

One healthy way to handle offenses is to put them in the proper perspective. When we experience an offense, it feels all-encompassing, as if it is our only reality or the most real thing in the world. In this week of Lent we will consider words from St. Paul that help us put offenses in the proper perspective.

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Pray today for the grace to see the offenses you suffer from the proper perspective.

Monday, March 1

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
—Romans 8:28

Paul says that in everything that happens to us, God works for good for those who love him. Do you know what “everything” means in the original Greek? It means *everything*. In everything that happens to us, God is working for good.

Paul does not say that everything that happens in life is good. Clearly, that is not true. There is evil in the world. But Paul is saying that in every situation, God is working on our behalf to bring about something good. Anyone can bring good out of good. God brings good out of evil, but we have to cooperate with him. We have to work *with* him. We have to be on the lookout for how to work with God so that he can bring good out of the offenses we suffer.

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Pray today for the perspective that God can bring good out of any offenses that you suffer.

Tuesday, March 2

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

—Romans 8:28–29

God brings good out of bad situations in our lives. Sometimes we don't get what we want; our plans don't work out, and then we realize that God protected us from a bad relationship, a bad business partnership, a bad deal or situation. God protected us from being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes God makes our situation better, but in every situation, good and bad, God is working to bring about goodness in our character. He is working to change us from the inside out.

In all situations, he is working to make us more like his Son. Our circumstances are not any better, but God is using a situation to grow our character so that we will conform to the image and character of Jesus. That's what Paul is talking about here.

When it comes to offenses, God wants to use them so that we become more like Jesus. He is using them to help us grow in patience, kindness, goodness, and understanding of others.

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Pray today that you would use offenses to grow to be more like Jesus.