

# Universal Prayer

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**22 February 2026 (Lent Sunday 1)**

**Presider:** God of the wilderness and the city, you do not abandon us when we are tested. Hear the prayers of your people as we begin this Lenten journey of transformation.

1. For Bishop Brian on the 8th anniversary of becoming our bishop and for the Church in Australia: that our Lenten practices lead to deeper trust in the Father and gentler hearts for the poor.  
**[pause] We pray to the Lord.**
2. For world leaders and those in power:  
that they may resist the temptation of pride and the pursuit of dominance, choosing instead the path of peace and the service of the poor.  
**[pause] We pray to the Lord.**
3. For those facing addiction or overwhelming temptation:  
that they may feel the presence of Jesus Christ in their wilderness and find the support they need to walk in freedom.  
**[pause] We pray to the Lord.**
4. For young people facing the pressures of social media, academic expectations, and uncertain futures,  
that they may discover their true worth in God's love.  
**[pause] We pray to the Lord.**
5. For our beloved dead, and those who have no one to pray for them:  
may the Lord bring them into the light of his presence.  
**[pause] We pray to the Lord.**

**Presider:** Father of mercies, hear our prayers.  
Lead us by your Spirit through this Lenten wilderness  
and make us one in your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

# Community Greeter | 22 February 2026

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Welcome everyone to St John's for our celebration of Mass.  
We gather today on the lands of the Dharawal people.

Our mission as a parish community is to know, follow and share Jesus with our neighbours.

- My name is \_\_\_\_\_
- Our celebrant is Fr John | Fr Richard
- Welcome to the first Sunday of Lent. Today, we enter the wilderness with Jesus to face our shadows and find God's grace.

We welcome anyone who is new, here for the first time, and any visitors. ***We are so glad that you are here with us!*** Let us now stand and unite as one to celebrate this Eucharist.

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***[Only if no music...]***

Let us pray the entrance antiphon together:

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

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## ***Penitential Act [Priest]***

Before we celebrate in the love of the God who is always calling and inviting us, let us pause and acknowledge our need for healing and life. *[All pause for silent prayer.]*

Lord Jesus, you are light in our darkness. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you bring peace when our hearts are restless. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the way that leads us from death to eternal life. Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,  
and lead us to the life of the age to come. Amen.

## **Wilderness calling**

Lent begins not in a cathedral but in a wilderness. Jesus is hungry, alone, and tested. The devil's offers seem reasonable: bread for a starving man, safety with a Scripture to back it up, influence to do more good. But each offer separates good gifts from the Giver. Jesus refuses shortcuts. He answers with Deuteronomy—Israel's wilderness manual—revealing that his Messiah-mission will be lived in trust, not spectacle or coercion (see Matthew 4:1-11; cf. Deut 6–8).

Genesis reminds us why this matters. The serpent's strategy is old: distort God's word, paint God as stingy, and invite us to "seize" autonomy. The fallout is familiar too: shame, hiding, blame. Yet even in Eden's aftermath, God seeks, clothes, and promises a future (Genesis 2–3).

St Paul proclaims the good news: where Adam's disobedience spread death, Christ's obedience overflows with grace and life (Romans 5:12–19). We don't white-knuckle Lent to impress God; we train our desires to love God and neighbour. Fasting helps us feel our hunger and turn to the Word. Almsgiving re-attaches our hearts to people rather than things. Prayer recentres us in worship so our work becomes service rather than self-promotion.

This week, try three simple steps: (1) Name one place you feel tested. (2) Choose a fast that leads you to Scripture (Matthew 4 daily). (3) Bless one neighbour with practical kindness. Our parish mission is "to know, follow and share Jesus with our neighbours." In the wilderness, Jesus shows us how. Worship first. Trust the Father. Love in action. Grace will do the rest.

## **Bulletin Reflection: The "If" Factor**

The temptation of Jesus begins with a tiny word: "If." "If you are the Son of God..." It's the devil's favourite tactic: to make us doubt our identity. If we doubt that we are truly God's beloved children, we start trying to "prove" it. We try to prove it through our wealth, our influence, or our perfect behaviour.

Lent is our annual 40-day detox from the "ifs" of the world. The world says: "If you have a nice house, you are successful." "If you are liked by everyone, you are worthy." Jesus stands in the desert and declares that He is the Son of God not because of what He does, but because of who He belongs to.

As we enter this season, don't let your "sacrifices" (giving up chocolate or coffee) be another way of trying to "earn" God's love. Instead, let them be a way of clearing the deck so you can hear the Father's voice saying to you: "You are my child, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." When we know who we are, we can follow Jesus anywhere—even into the messy, complicated, and beautiful streets of our neighbourhood. This Lent, let's move from "If" to "Amen."

## **From Dust to Grace: Choosing Trust Over Temptation**

Today we begin our forty-day journey with Jesus toward Easter. The readings take us to the heart of what it means to be human: created in God's image yet vulnerable to temptation, fallen yet offered redemption through Christ.

In Genesis, we see humanity at its most beautiful and most tragic. Made from dust yet breathing with divine life, Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with God, creation, and each other. But the serpent's whisper—"You will be like God"—revealed the fundamental temptation that still haunts us today: the desire to be in control, to have it all, to transcend our creaturely limitations.

How often do we hear that same whisper in our consumer culture? "You deserve this." "You need that." "This will finally make you happy." The promise that the next purchase, achievement, or experience will complete us echoes through shopping centres, social media, and even our own restless hearts.

Paul reminds us that we are not alone in this struggle. Through Adam's disobedience, sin entered the world, but through Christ's obedience, grace abounds even more. Where the first Adam failed, Jesus—the new Adam—succeeded. In the wilderness, facing the same fundamental temptations, Jesus chose trust over control, service over power, dependence on God over self-reliance.

This Lent, we are invited to join Jesus in the wilderness. Not to escape our temptations, but to face them with prayer, fasting, and acts of mercy. The wilderness need not be a place of defeat. With Christ as our companion,

it becomes a place of growth, a place where we discover that God's grace is more powerful than any temptation we face.

As we journey together these forty days, may we learn to choose, like Jesus, the way of humble trust in our loving Father.

**Key Takeaway:**

Lent is not about perfection, but about intention—choosing, each day, to trust God's our neighbours.

**Vocation View (20–30 words)**

Like Jesus, be led by the Spirit into the adventure of trust. Resist shortcuts; choose worship. Persevere, and the Father will reveal your path and purpose. (Matthew 4:1-11)

Jesus conquered temptation through the power of Scripture and trust in the Father. Listen deeply to God's Word; it will reveal the unique path he has designed for your life. (Matthew 4:1-11)

Jesus faced temptation in the wilderness and chose obedience to God. In life's challenging moments, trust in God's calling and follow faithfully. (Matthew 4:1-11)

**The Bulletin Joke**

A guy goes to his priest and says, "Father, for Lent this year, I've decided to give up my bad habit of judging people."

The priest smiles and says, "That's wonderful! A very holy choice."

The guy replies, "I know, right? I'm probably the most humble person in this entire parish now."

**Parish Joke**

A man was proudly telling his friend about his Lenten discipline: "I've given up chocolate, coffee, and social media for Lent!"

His friend replied, "Wow, that's impressive! How's it going?"

"Well," the man said, "I'm writing you this letter because I can't text you, I'm exhausted because I can't have coffee, and I'm stress-eating carrots because I can't have chocolate. But spiritually... I'm growing!"

*Sometimes the path to holiness is paved with good intentions and carrot sticks!*