

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

The victory has been won and there’s still a fight. Both those statements are true as you go through this life. You have the victory over the devil, over temptation, over sin, and over death. You still, though, face and fight these things in this life. As a Christian, though, you face them as one who has the victory in Christ. Jesus has overcome them for you. He has answered for you sin on the cross. He teaches you how to fight and live by faith as his people whom he has redeemed.

Temptation comes from three places in your lives: your fallen flesh, the world, and the devil. All three sources are deadly and seek to take you away from Christ, his church, and your salvation. As Christians you have the victory in Christ, but God still warns you lest you fall prey to these things and perish eternally. Temptation, then is something to take seriously. It’s no joke, rather it’s a fight and a struggle. Being a Christian doesn’t make you immune to temptation, in reality you have a target on you as a baptized child of God.

The difference between the unbeliever and the Christian, however, is that the Christian sees the danger and fights against it. The terrifying thing is when someone no longer thinks he needs to repent or he goes about his life blissfully ignorant or willfully oblivious to the fact the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour him.

You can almost hear the sinister chuckles of the devil when people think they are beyond spiritual things. The devil has it easy when people want to be the skeptic or write the devil off as myth. A common phrase you will hear thrown around is something to the effect of “the greatest trick the devil ever played is getting people to think he doesn’t exist.” That’s not necessarily wrong and another point to that would be when the devil gets people to let their guards down or just not care at all. Acedia is called the “noonday devil.” It’s related to the deadly sin of sloth which really has a sense of apathy to it. Not caring or putting the struggle against the devil and temptation aside is playing with deadly fire. God warns you about the struggle so pay attention and fight.

In the Large Catechism we confess that, “we Christians must be armed and daily expect to be constantly attacked. No one may go on in security and carelessly, as though the devil were far from us. At all times we must expect and block his blows. Though I am now chaste, patient, kind, and in firm faith, the devil will this very hour send such an arrow into my heart that I can scarcely stand. For he is an enemy that never stops or becomes tired. So when one temptation stops, there always arise others and fresh ones. So there is no help or comfort except to run here, take hold of the Lord’s Prayer, and speak to God from the heart like this: ‘Dear Father, You have asked me to pray. Don’t let me fall because of temptations.’ Then you will see that the temptations must stop and finally confess themselves conquered. If you try to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space. For he has a serpent’s head. If it finds an opening into which it can slip, the whole body will follow without stopping. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back.”

Listen to Jesus today and see what he does. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” In those few words there’s such great comfort about what your Lord has done for you and what this now means for you as his people. Right after his baptism, Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. The Lord was really there in this place and he stood face to face with the devil himself.

Jesus is true God and true man. The reading from Hebrews says, “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Seeing Jesus face temptation in the wilderness is to see your brother in the flesh face it.

## Invocabit—First Sunday in Lent—February 22, 2026

When you face temptation, in your sin, you face it as ones who are slaves to sin and held captive to the devil. This is why you fight but the victory has been won as you belong to Christ. Jesus is without sin and cannot sin. He overcame these assaults as only he can do and now in Christ you have his victory. His active obedience and faithfulness to the Father is counted to you through faith in him. Now as a baptized child of God, you not only have his victory, but you face temptation as one who is no longer a slave to sin, death, and the devil. He faced temptation as God in the flesh and suffers the assaults of the devil as the victorious one. Think about that, the Son of God underwent temptation by the devil. He did so, though, as one who knows what it is to suffer and endure. He was tempted in every way you are in this life, but he never once entertained the notion to fall into sin. He stands face to face with the devil in the wilderness and overcomes him by his faithfulness and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

Have this mind of Christ and know who you are as you go through this life. See the importance of memorizing Scripture and your Catechism which confesses Scripture. See and use the weapons against the devil, the world, and your fallen flesh. This is what it means to remember your baptism daily by turning from sin and desiring to live the new life you have in Christ. Part of this new life is using that fruit of the Spirit you have which are things like goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. How can you stand up to temptation and use the sword of the spirit if you never pick up the sword?

Wisdom and discernment too come from being a student of God's word and living it out in your life. This isn't some abstract notion. How this plays out practically is for you to always fix your eyes on Christ and be a student of his word. As Christians be wise as serpents yet innocent as doves. Don't put yourself into situations where you will be led into temptation and away from Christ and his word. Ask those diagnostic questions before you undertake things in your life. Receive the Lord's Supper regularly. Confess your sin to your pastor and receive absolution.

Another thing with this as a Christian is who you surround yourself with in life. It's always been important but especially when you are growing up and as adults to surround yourself with good Christian friends who share the same faith as you. The body of Christ cares for one another and sometimes you need a fellow Christian to look you in the eye and tell you repent or warn you. Having a good Christian friend who knows what temptation is and where it comes from is vitally important. Good Christian friendship goes beyond just someone you like to hang out with, that's important to be sure, but people who themselves are concerned about the things of God as well and rejoice in the fellowship you have together as the Holy Spirit has gathered you together as his holy people. And, most importantly, a Christian friend is going to forgive you, comfort you with the forgiveness of Christ, and point you back to your Lord when you do sin or fall.

Prayer is another weapon against the devil. Christians pray and this another dynamic in all this as well and is something so obvious the devil likes to attack it in full force. God calls you to pray without ceasing. He doesn't call you to pray when convenient or when you feel like it. No, you are to pray every day whenever possible for all circumstances. Know too God himself prays for you and sometimes, as Romans 8 teaches, "with groanings too deep for words." Fasting, in this reading, is used by Jesus as well. He denies himself in order to discipline the body and rely on the care of God more for man "does not live by bread alone." If there is something in this life that is keeping you from God examine what that is and why this is the case.

Examine your life too and know where you struggle and where danger and sin crouch at the door seeking to devour you. This is where self-control and wisdom come into play. An alcoholic knows not to walk into a bar and order a drink. Someone struggling with sexual sin doesn't put himself into situations that can get out of hand. This is war so know the tactics of your own sinful flesh, the fallen world around you, and the devil and don't be easy prey or a sitting duck. That's not what you have learned from Christ and what you have been called to be as his baptized child. 1 Corinthians 10:13 is one of the most often misquoted passages of Scripture, but it applies here in what it really says regarding temptation. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be

able to endure it.” God is the one who delivers you even as he has taught you to pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Dear people of God, the fight is real, but the victory has been won. Those words of the Introit today speak volumes to you about who you are as a Christian facing temptation and who your God is as you face them. “When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.” So, what does this mean?

View temptation through Christ’s victory and see his rebuke of the devil. The discipline of Jesus is the discipline of a Father to his Son, and you are sons of God through faith in Christ. Even as you face temptation you see what the result and outcome is as you fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith. You see in Christ you have the victory won for you and given to you. The Lord gives you this in your baptism and today as your sin is forgiven through his word, absolution, and Supper. And not only that but he strengthens you, preserves you, and guards and keeps you as his own through these means. The Father holds before your eyes Jesus who in weakness, hunger, and great suffering is the one whose life is always fully righteous and obedient to the Father and the law of God. Adam failed, the people in the wilderness who came out of Egypt failed, you in your life have failed. Jesus, however, did not nor could he fail for he is the Son of God and baptized into Christ his victory is your victory. The first Adam fell. The second Adam was faithful. Your old Adam is unrighteous. The Second Adam, Jesus, is your righteousness.

Take comfort today in Jesus. Temptation for you is something in which you have the victory in Christ, and you have the promise of God to take care of you now and the future rest and glory to come. Jesus forgives you. When you pray the Lord’s Prayer you are praying as one who belongs to Christ and is covered with his righteousness. The very one who is perfectly obedient to God’s law, has overcome the devil, died for your sin, and gives you victory over death itself. He sees you in your suffering, sympathizes with you and prays for you at the throne of God.

When you hear this account, then, of Jesus every year on this first Sunday in Lent see Jesus as the one who fights for you. See his faithfulness and know that he did this for your sake. He endured it all so that you would have the victory and by his obedience God would count it to you as it is received through faith. That’s the wonderful thing in all this and thanks be to God for what Jesus has done for.

Also see in this reading who you are now as one who is baptized into Christ, you a Christian. In Galatians 2 God tells us who we are as St. Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” You are a new creation in Christ and your life is hidden in him as he has clothed you with himself.

So, when you face temptation in your life, don’t try to match wits with the devil, the world, and your fallen flesh. Don’t try to make excuses and think you can handle all of this because you can’t. Know and trust God’s word and recite it. Make the sign of the cross over yourself to remember your baptism and say, “I am baptized in Christ.” Pray to God for deliverance, sing great hymns with real meaty doctrine that teach you the faith and how to confess the faith. These are your weapons as a Christian going through this life.

Your Lord, Jesus, has done it and so you have access to God at all times and especially when you face temptation. Listen again to Hebrews 4, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” God’s throne for you is a throne of grace because Jesus is your high priest who intercedes for you by means of his blood shed as the sacrifice for your sin. In times of need God shows you mercy and helps you. In the times when you do fall short, confess your sin and repent. Go to his throne of grace for you have an advocate with the Father in Jesus whose blood cleanses you from all sin. In faith, then, hear God’s word as one who

Invocabit—First Sunday in Lent—February 22, 2026

hears the voice of the stronger man, the victor in all of this. He has given you his word which pierces through the voices of temptation and instead speaks the words of law and gospel. He silences these things and then says to you, “your sin is forgiven.”

Dear Christians, God the Lord is your God and he fights for you. The battle indeed is the Lord’s, and he is the victor for you. This is who he is, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. He has accomplished it for you and baptized into Christ you have everything. As a Christian you are no longer a slave to sin, death, and the devil and go through this life with the confidence of Christ that clings to him and his mercy alone and looks forward to the day when all temptation comes to an end. Until that day go through this world as one who sees all these things through the lens of Christ crucified for you who is your great high priest. Go to his throne of grace and hold fast your confession knowing that you will not be abandoned or forsaken by him who has done all things well even overcoming temptation for you. And you know how this all ends. You already have the victory and you have life forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.