

*Liturgical music article for the First Sunday in Lent, 2026, at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Seattle.*

Our Lenten observance begins in earnest this week, and today's readings, propers, and musical selections help orient us in a spirit of penitence fitting to this season; even the Mass setting sung at Noon (*Missa in Die Tribulationis*, or "Mass in a day of tribulation") reminds us of the Lenten call to 'rend our hearts' during this time. Still, the text of the introit ("When he calls to me, I will answer him..."), a response to our opening hymn's "fervent prayer, with many a tear poured forth by all the penitent," reminds us that Our Lord walks with us during these forty days and does not leave us helpless.

As Jesus' trials in the Gospel remind us, Lent is a time for us to purify our desires and shun temptations. The offertory anthem follows this thread as the choir prays for an increase in faith and desire for what is good: "Fill my portion in thy peace... be my life, my soul, my surer self to me." At communion, our prayer intensifies in the antiphon ("Listen to my words, Lord; understand my groaning"), but is met with sweet assurance in the anthem, *Let Nothing Ever Grieve Thee*. While the season of Lent may try us, we can rest in the knowledge that "tomorrow will bring thee God's help benign and grace sublime in mercy." In closing, the recessional hymn brings together these themes from today's Mass - we "from worldly joys abstain, fasting with unceasing prayer" during these holy days of Lent, confident that in doing so "holier gladness ours shall be." May we go forth from Mass strengthened in faith and fervor during our Lenten observances.