

1st Sunday of Lent

Entering our spiritual desert

Lent is a time of intensive spiritual preparation for the great feast of Easter. It is a sacred season when we enter our spiritual desert to confront our human temptations and the weaknesses that hinder us from living in a right relationship with God and others. Lent calls us to restrain our bodily desires, return to God and encounter His transformative grace.

Every year, the first Sunday of Lent, brings us to contemplate Jesus' temptation in the desert. Today's gospel from Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread, to worship Satan and to leap from the pinnacle of the temple. The devil tried to deceive Jesus with offers of comfort, power, and prestige but he resisted them all and emerged victorious over the evil one. Jesus relied on God's word and remained focused on his mission and purpose in the world. He obeyed his father's will rather than to surrender to the devil.

All of us face temptations in our lives. The temptations come to us in different sizes, in small and big ways. Sometimes they come in the form of sinful attractions and linger in our minds. There are times when we entertain sinful thoughts. We succumb to bodily pleasures such as the lust of the flesh, the eye and the heart, and the pride of life. We slip into the lies and deceit of Satan and see salvation in human power, wealth, and fame.

Jesus teaches us otherwise that it is only in God that we find true joy and the gift of salvation. He urges us to take our spiritual battles seriously and strive to overcome the temptations of the evil one.

As Christians we need always to be mindful of the goodness and providence of God in our lives. We should acknowledge the blessings that God bestows upon each of us and our loved ones. God remains gracious to us just He was to the people of Israel.

In the first reading, Moses reminded the people of Israel about how God delivered their ancestors from oppression in Egypt and brought them to a place of safety and abundance in the Promised Land. This was a great deed that the chosen people should not take for granted. Moses instructed them to offer the first fruits of their harvest to God in gratitude for the Lord's provision and faithfulness to them and their ancestors.

Like the people of ancient Israel, we too offer to God our best, by showing love and charity towards the poor and needy this Lent. We ask that God may bless our Lenten observances and help us to be transformed and renewed in His grace and holiness.

God bless,

Fr. Dr. Ben