

2020 March 01

First Sunday of Lent

Readings:

First: Genesis 2.7-9, 16-18, 25; 3.1-7+, "A and they knew that they were naked." (3.7b)

Psalm 51, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity." (2a)

Second: Romans 5.12- 19, "By the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (19b)

Gospel: Matthew 4.1-11, Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (7)

Desert Experience

Lent is a time of intimate friendship – with the Lord and our brethren. It also leads to an intimate touch with the self. It invites us to lend an ear, a hand and open our hearts. Listening to the voice of the Lord and the cry of the people demands the silence of the desert. The most endearing place of rest, relaxation and inner peace for Jesus was the desert. It was his private appointment chamber with the Father.

Some of the prominent prophets of the Old Testament like Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist and the like also found desert the right place to meet God. The birth of religious life in the Church was in the desert and it was in such deserts that significant writings, biblical translations, transcriptions and development of theology originally started. A group of early century teachers of the Church are known as Desert Fathers. Thus desert is not that barren but the most fertile soil for the soul, mind and even body! For us our churches are wonderful spots to have intimate and private time with God and us.

God speaks to us in silence. In the depth of silence we too are inclined to listen to God and respond. For forty days and nights Jesus was in the silence of the desert, and during our Lenten observance we make an attempt to catch up with Jesus. If we manage to have a personal encounter with him we are not likely to be the same person. An encounter with Jesus changes us and transforms us into a better spiritual being, a better Christian, a better human being, a better brother, sister, parent, child, service person, a better parishioner and so on.

If this closeness happens to be intense it will also make us exhausted. And that will be the time the enemy tries to creep into our life, just like he did with Jesus with the temptations. Intimacy with God doesn't necessarily keep us away from temptation. God is always active and alive in our life. The enemy too is. Hence we need the strength and power of the **Word of God** with which Jesus fought all his temptations. Temptations are not just momentary and casual as we feel Jesus had in the desert. These and similar temptations haunted him all through his adult earthly life till the very last moment, and it is the same way with us. Hence we need to be alert and alive to them. Lent prepares us to win over the temptations and to design a new course of life of conversion, leading to the inner joy and peace of the Easter.

Fr. George