

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR B 2021

**Gn 9:8-15, 1Pt 3:18-22, MK 1:12-15**

Lent is like an annual spiritual retreat to renew our relationship with God, to heal our broken relationship with one another, to become better Christians.

And we do this in three ways:

**Prayer:** Lent is a time of prayer.

There are things, temptations, and struggles, we don't pray about. Maybe because we're uncomfortable before God, possibly because we've prayed before and nothing has happened. Can I face the challenge of honestly bringing my temptations and struggles to the foot of the cross in prayer? Pray- talk to God heart to heart.

Prayer is the strength of every believer in God. Participate in holy Mass, meditate on the Word of God and spend some time in prayer and remember to pray for others.

**Fasting:** "So, what are you giving up for Lent this year?"

When I was a child, Lent was easy. I would give up chocolate.

One year, my mom gently suggested, "Patrick, for Lent, maybe you should give up fighting with your brother." I laughed and said, "Oh mom, Jesus knows I can't do that!" because junior brother was so annoying that even if I don't want to fight he would want to fight me.

Sometimes we give something up for Lent, but we give up something that really won't require much change in us.

Fast not only from food. Fast from saying hurting words and say kind words.

Fast from anger and be fill with patience.

Fast from negativity and be fill with hope.

Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy. Fast from sin and bad habits

Would my fasting help others? If my fasting does not bring benefits to others then fasting is fake. Our fasting has meaning only if it brings benefits to others.

**3. Charity:** the best act charity we could do during Lent is just two words: Be kind, be kind to one another. And this is not easy, it is not easy to be selfless, it is not easy to put others first, it is not easy to love people unconditionally.

Let us not over look the details in gospel reading. Mark says the "The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness.." In the bible especially the Old Testament the desert or wilderness means a number of things for the people of Israel.

First the desert was the place where they experience freedom. God led the people out of their slavery in Egypt. They go through the water of the sea and then they get to the desert and now they are free.

In the desert God frees us from the things that try to ensnare us.

What else does the desert mean in the Old Testament? Well the desert is the place where the people of Israel have privilege encounters with God.

In the desert when they are hungry God sends them manna, bread from heaven. In the desert when they are thirsty God gives them water from the rock. Moses goes up the mountain in the desert, he spends 40 days in prayer and fasting and he comes down the mountain with God's law, what we called the 10 commandments.

In the desert God took care of his people, God led his people to freedom, God fed his people, God spoke to his people. Privilege encounters.

Thirdly, the desert is also the place where God's people struggle because sometimes they feared that God was not with them and they asked out loud, should we go back to Egypt back to slavery at least we had food back there.

When they were hungry and God's presence wasn't quite obvious as they wanted it to be they abandoned the living God and created idols. In the desert the people sinned.

One thing becomes clear. God is showing us something new, something powerful in the way Jesus responds to the wilderness. In all things Jesus stays faithful to the Father's will and the Father's way. And that obedience is how Jesus saves us and the whole world.

Mark says that Jesus remained in the desert for 40 days. In the bible the number 40 symbolizes a period of time in which God asks us to eat less so that we can experience our deep hunger for God's love and God's truth.

The number 40 symbolizes a period of time, that's a time of preparation. We are moving towards Easter, toward the celebration of Christ's resurrection.

So Mark's says "Jesus remained in the desert for 40 days, and was tempted by Satan.." another way to translate that is tested.

Remember back in the book of Genesis, the evil one tempted Adam and Eve encouraging them to disobey God and God's life-giving word. Adam and Eve were beloved children of God. Yet when they were tempted they did not stay faithful to the Father. So they are driven out of the garden.

When the people of Israel were tempted in the desert, they too chose to sin, they created idols.

And here is Jesus, the beloved Son of God. He is tempted by the evil one and the gospels tells us that he stays faithful to the Father always.

In the example of Jesus, God the father is showing us that faithfulness is possible. We are all tempted and tested but we do not have to give in to the power of sin.

Being a beloved son or daughter of God does not exempt us from facing life's difficulties or dealing with life's burdens. Remember John the Baptist appeared in the desert, preaching and teaching. He called everyone to change their ways.

And what was his reward? John was arrested and eventually he was beheaded. That's what happened to John when he spoke God's truth. Jesus too was faithful, he got arrested and

eventually crucified. We too are called to be faithful. Do we understand that faithfulness will cost us something.

As Christians we want all the blessings of being Christians, but what will I do when being a believer becomes demanding?

If you want an easy life, don't be a priest, don't get marry, don't be a Christian hahaha

We live in a world where being an authentic Christian is hard, it will cost us something.

Being a Christian requires fortitude. Faith requires work.

If you have been thinking/planning to fix your broken relation with God, family or friends – do it this Lent season.

If there is a bad habit you know it is destroying your life and you want to work on it – Do it this lent.

If you have been planning to stop lying, gossiping, judging others, cheating – do it this lent.

Lent season is a time to go back to God. Spent your lent in a holy way

**In fasting** we sacrifice our love of “Self” so that we can become free to love God and others.

**In prayer** we sacrifice our love of time” to make time for the love of God.

**In almsgiving** we sacrifice our love of “stuff” to make room for the love of others.

In Lent we consume less, we pray more and we strive to serve others. In that way God is preparing us , purifying and strengthening our faith.

During this Lent season, don't wait for others to be kind, loving, forgiving, compassionate, grateful, generous – lead the way.

Let us make the Lent season a season of prayer, spiritual renewal, charitable works, a new beginning, grace and blessings.

Fr Patrick