

## **First Sunday of Lent – 03-06-2022**

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.”

Lent commemorates the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in preparation for his salvific ministry, which culminated in his suffering, death and resurrection.

Every year, if we allow ourselves, we are led by the Church into our Lenten desert for forty days in imitation of Jesus.

And if we are trying to live a more authentic Catholic life then we too can expect to be tempted by the devil during this time. If Jesus was tempted then so will we be tempted.

The difference between Jesus and us though is that sometimes we give in to the devils temptations and we sin.

This is one of the reasons why we are asked to make some additional sacrifices and do extra penance at this time so that we can better resist the temptations that will inevitably come our way.

In the first reading we heard that the Egyptians had made the Israelites veritable slaves. So the Israelites cried out to the Lord and he rescued them. He heard their plea and brought

them out of Egypt into the Promised Land with a strong hand and outstretched arm.

For sure the slavery that the Israelites endured was evil but slavery to sin is so much more evil.

Slavery to sin can blind us to what is truly good and can ultimately bar us from the Promised Land of heaven.

But with strong hands and outstretched arms, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders Jesus opened the gates of heaven for all of us on the cross.

This is why we are led by the Church into the desert of Lent for forty days to be tempted – to better imitate our savior by acts of self-denial so that we can more effectively take up our cross in union with Jesus and ultimately rise with him at life's end.

God allows us to undergo temptation so that we may grow in virtue and not so easily succumb to vice. Temptation itself is actually a positive thing provided we don't give in to it.

If we can resist the temptations to sin and continue our practices of self-denial throughout the Lenten season then it stands to reason that we can continue it throughout the coming year and even to the end of our lives.

But we can't do it alone. By our own power we will surely fail. Neither can we enter the Promised Land under our own power.

We need to cry out full-throated to the Lord to save us just like the Israelites did when they were enslaved by the Egyptians.

Then if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead our lives will better reflect our faith and we will be saved.

But we must never forget the words of St. Peter from Sacred Scripture: "Stay sober and alert because your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith."

The very last line in today's gospel should be a warning to us all. "When the devil had finished every temptation against him he departed from him for a time."

He departed from Jesus but only for a time.

The devil will not give up his pursuit against us until we take our very last breath so we need to be vigilant, crying out constantly to the Lord for help so that we may resist him solid in our faith and finally be saved.