

Spiritual Reflection - First Sunday of Lent

The desert is a harsh and horrible place. Why would Jesus subject himself to 40 days in the desert, among wild beasts, and with Satan?

The number 40 in Scripture has a special significance. It is a time of great preparation. We recall in Exodus that Moses went up to the top of Mount Sinai and there spent 40 days fasting and praying; and also there received the Ten Commandments for the people. The Israelites after fleeing Egypt spent 40 years wandering in the desert.

Why would Jesus, God-made-man, enter willingly into the desert among wild beasts and be tempted by Satan? Always obedient to the Father, He showed us the dominion of God's power over evil. With God's grace, we can only overcome evil by choosing God.

He tells us in the present tense, "This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." He is speaking to us now, and always. He asks us to enter willingly into our own desert and there meet our demons and ills. In the desert, He has shown us His great wisdom, courage and perseverance. By His example, we are to imitate Him, so that we, too, may emerge victorious against evil and without delay spread the good news of God's plan of salvation for all His people, timeless... without end.

Just as Jesus was tempted, we, too, shall face temptations. We need to return to the victory gained for us during Jesus's trials in the desert. We need not be afraid to be tempted, but rather to look at sin squarely in the eye, call its name and acknowledge its destructive effects and turn away from it. Refuse to take matters into our own hands and believe that God's plan for us is perfect. Choosing to sin is not of God. Sin turns us away from God and leads us to misdirected paths, desires and stubborn wills to 3Ds ... darkness, death and the Devil. Why would God allow sin or the Devil to exist? In order that we will run (YES RUN!!! without delay) to God, return, repent, ask for His gracious Mercy, be forgiven and tell others the joy of being free. Sin separates us from God.

A small, practical step during these next 40 days is to acknowledge our need for time and a place to be quiet and be still. Let us enter willingly so to quiet the mind and heart in order that we can examine ourselves rightly. Let us ask and allow God's help to purify our hearts. Maybe a good starting point is the courage to ask for this grace, "Lord, forgive the wrong I have done." Lent is a good time to step out of our comfort zones, challenge and commit ourselves with steadfastness to sacrifices acceptable to God (prayer, fasting and almsgiving)... for He is a just judge. He sees and knows everything even before we ask.

May our forty days and forty nights bring the renewal and transformation that produces in us what God wills for us...a pure and healthy wellspring of life...eternal life.

~ Cecilia Cortes-Peck