

1st Sunday of Lent

Deut 26:4-10

Ps 91:1-2, 10-15

Rom 10:8-13

Lk 4:1-13

In our first reading we hear Moses tell the Israelites about several centuries of their history in a single paragraph. This is a very brief summary of their time of slavery in Egypt and the Exodus to the Promised Land. Once they entered into the Promised Land the people were to bring the first fruits of the spring harvest. They were to do this to always remind them of how God had rescued them from slavery, and had brought them to the freedom that they were now enjoying. We know the history though. We know that shortly after entering the Promised Land that the Israelites turned away from the Lord and began living very sinful lives.

Jesus knew the history of His people too, especially the story of the Exodus. Jesus was not going to repeat the same mistakes that His ancestors had when they had wandered in the desert for forty years. We can see in the temptations that Jesus experienced in His forty days in the desert the same temptations the Israelites faced while in the desert during their Exodus.

The first temptation that Jesus faced was to satisfy His hunger. Jesus hadn't eaten for forty days and He was hungry. The temptation was to rely on Himself and turn the stone into bread. Jesus knew that He could rely on every word that comes from His heavenly Father. During the Exodus the Israelites complained bitterly while in the desert. They wanted to go back to Egypt because they missed their favorite foods. How many of us have complained about giving up certain foods or drinks for Lent after only five days? How many of us have given in to the temptation already and eaten some of those things that we said that we were going to give up?

The second temptation that Jesus faced was to be given power if only He would worship the devil. Jesus knew to worship God alone. During the Exodus when Moses was up on the mountain for forty days and nights receiving the commandments the Israelites quickly fell into idolatry and started to worship the golden calf. They quickly gave up the living God for worldly things that bring temporary pleasure but will never last forever. Do we value the things of this world more highly than we value our relationship with God? What are the worldly things that we value so highly that we are not willing to part from them? It's easy to fall to this temptation. During this season of Lent we should ask the Holy Spirit to point out the things that we value a little too highly and that get in the way of our relationship with God?

The third temptation that Jesus faced was to put God to the test. The devil tempted Jesus to throw Himself down from the parapet of the Temple in order to have God save His life. Jesus knew not to put God to the test, but to trust that God would always take care of Him. During the Exodus the Israelites constantly tested God despite the fact that God had performed miracle after miracle for them, and had taken care of their every need. They didn't trust in the Lord and were constantly making demands. How many times have we said, "Where is God? Why doesn't He take care of things?" How often do we rely on ourselves? We feel that it is up to us to get things done.

The story of the Israelites Exodus from Egypt is an important one for us today. We are on an Exodus too. This life that we are living is an Exodus. We have been brought out of slavery to sin and death through our baptism and we are currently in the desert. God is leading us on this journey of life to the Promised Land, which is heaven. Many people may think that it is just about the forty days of Lent that we are asked to make these sacrifices (changes). No, this Exodus is a lifetime journey. *Lent helps us refocus every year on what is important and on what our ultimate goal is.* We need this yearly reminder of Lent to help us get our priorities straight again. But if we think the forty days of Lent are just about Jesus' forty days in the desert, or the forty years that the Israelites were in the desert then we miss the bigger picture. And the bigger picture is making it to our final destination, which is heaven.

Jesus is our example to follow during this season of Lent, and throughout life. Jesus was tempted by the devil but refused to give into his empty promises. When we are tempted we want to follow the example of Jesus, and ask for His help, to resist temptation. If we try to rely only on our own strength to overcome temptation this will lead to failure. We should always turn to Jesus and rely on His strength, for He is the Rock that will keep us steady when temptation comes.

Lent is a time to prepare us for the Easter celebration to come. If we dedicate ourselves to being faithful to our Lenten devotions then we will have a greater appreciation for Easter. Lent can help purify us for our journey through life too. As we draw closer to Jesus through our devotions Jesus will help prepare us for the final journey. This is what Jesus wants too; that we follow Him faithfully so that we may be able to celebrate the banquet of the Lamb at the end of time.