

# *1st Sunday of Lent, year B*

## Food for Thought

The Gospel Story today is the familiar story of the Temptations of Jesus in the Desert.

Let us situate this story in the life and ministry of Jesus. Having been baptised in the Jordan River and joined by public sinners in a very communal place, Jesus is led into the Desert to be tested! Notice it was 'the Spirit' which impelled Jesus to go into the Desert. In doing so, Jesus was identifying himself with his ancestors; the people of Israel (God's people), as they too had been in the Desert for a long time after their deliverance from slavery in Egypt; they too were tested, and they were also invited into the Marriage Covenant initiated by the Lord God on Mt Sinai during that journey.

That great event of Salvation had left an indelible mark upon the corporate mind of God's people. In Jesus, we now see him being tested, and being empowered by the Spirit, which enabled him to refute the Temptations, in favour of a life orientation of unconditional loving service. These Temptations were not just applicable to Jesus, they are the Temptations that have always harassed humanity...Here they are: - The pursuit of Power, the pursuit of Glory and the pursuit of Avoiding Responsibility. These Temptations were refuted by Jesus, but they came back to haunt Him many times during His lifetime, in various ways. The same Temptations haunt us all our lifetime! Jesus was nurtured by that special filial relationship with his Father, not only during that time of testing, but always.

Jesus did not have to go very far from the Jordan to be in the Desert...just a few miles walk, and in fact he was in sight of Mt. Nebo on the opposite side of the Jordan valley...the very place where Moses and the Hebrews, viewed the Promised Land, after their long trek through the Desert. He was also in sight of Jericho, the great salad bowl of the Jordan Valley....food, fruit, and water a plenty. Our Desert experience can be right now!

As we enter into the spirit of Lent, let us check out the direction and quality of our lives. How do we deal with temptation? Do we sustain our inner selves by responding to God's life-giving Word in Sacred Scripture? Do we take 'time-out' (a mini-Desert experience) to re-evaluate the quality of our lives, or are we in fact being led by alternatives to the Gospel message? Do we make room for God's Spirit, to bring to the surface in ourselves, the holiness that lies deep within?

May the Lenten reminder of our fragility stay close to us, if we feel tempted to create an everlasting city within ourselves? "Remember, we are but dust, and unto dust we shall return; turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." Amen.

*by Fr. Kevin Walsh Sydney Australia Year B 2024*

*Let us pause for reflection, and prayer for one another during this week of Lent.*