



HOLY MASS

**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
(YEAR C)**

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READINGS

1ST Reading: Deut. 26: 4-10

RESP. PSALM: Psalm: 91

2nd Reading: Romans 10: 8-13

GOSP. ACCL.: Mtt. 4:4b

Gospel: Luke 4: 1-13

HOMILY TOPIC

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TEMPTATION IN A DESERT EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Last Wednesday, the Church invited us to embark on a journey of lent leading towards Easter. We have been called to follow Christ by baptism, but haven't yet lived fully the life of a Christian. Lent calls us to conversion that can only come through a total self-giving and desert discipline.

INTRODUCTION

The word ‘Desert’ provokes the ideas of drought, of lack, of loneliness, of dread of some sort, of abandonment of challenge, of toughness and so on. We can consider our sojourn through earth as a desert experience and especially this season of lent.

READING

1ST Reading: Deut. 26: 4-10

Today's readings are about faithfulness to God. The first reading presents to us the journey of Israel from the time of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan, to the family's going down into Egypt, and to the eventual deliverance and Exodus into the Promise Land.

READING

1ST Reading: Deut. 26: 4-10

Yet, in the course of God's eternal plan of salvation, all these miseries were nothing more than a sojourn or journey. We too can focus on our time of trial that we think defines our whole life; God saw Israel's experience in Egypt as temporal. Our trying moments or hard times could be our journey to salvation.

READINGS

2nd Reading: Romans 10: 8-13

To possess the salvific plan of God, St. Paul in the second reading tells us that we must believe and have faith in Christ as our Lord and Saviour; “For every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13). Our belief and our faith will constantly motivate us in this journey of salvation.

GOSPEL

Gosp.: Luke 4: 1-13

Christ in the gospel had his sojourn in the wilderness. He was led by the Spirit and was there in the wilderness for forty days, where he was tempted by Satan. Being led or driven by the Spirit is an indication that all Christ did while on earth was through the prompting and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

TAKE NOTE OF THIS..

- **That in Our Lord's time in the desert. First, it came after his Baptism, warning us against thinking that the spiritual life is a contest within the scope of human ability.**
- **Second, it was initiated by the Holy Spirit.**
- **Third, it was a time of solitude, in which our Lord was separated from others.**
- **Fourth, it was a time of great self-denial**
- **Fifth, during this time, he received divine assistance from the ministry of the angels.**
- **The forty days of Lent provide us with the opportunity to imitate Christ's battle against the world, the flesh and the devil.**

TAKE NOTE OF THIS..

Note that man can separate himself from the temptations of the world, and from the flesh, but not from those of the devil himself, who can find us even in the wilderness. The only to deal with the temptations of the devil is to resist them with the strength that God supplies. Jesus did not “enter into temptation” relying on the strength of his own understanding or will or body or companions. He relied on the grace of God alone. In this, Our Lord shows us how to overcome temptation and in this we must seek to imitate Him.

ISRAELITES AND JESUS CHRIST

If we cross-match the desert experience of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years and Jesus' own experience in the desert for forty days, then the idea of a battle ground, a testing ground becomes clear. The difference is just that Israelites could not pass the desert test and had to linger for forty years with the original trustees of God's promises all dead, while Jesus passed his desert test and in it, left us an example, a power and a grace.

STYLE/METHOD OF THIS TEMPTATIONS

- **A. Through Carnal Desires (Cf. 1st Temptation)**
- **B. Through mental suggestions (cf. 2nd Temptation)**
- **C. Through inner imagination (cf. 3rd Temptation)**

LESSONS FROM JESUS' EXPERIENCE

Our focus today is to learn from Jesus' experience, especially some important points about the nature of the struggle/test and how we may conquer like Jesus.

1. WE LEARN ABOUT THE TEMPTER'S TEST

The Devil's test in this desert of life would always come to us, as it did to Jesus, through our POWERS just as all the temptations were based on the exceptional powers of Jesus to do these things. NEEDS and DESIRES be it physical or spiritual, material or mental, social or political, economic or psychological, our PLANS and GOALS as we find in the three temptations of Jesus.

2. WE LEARN TO REMAIN CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT

Jesus was filled and led by the Spirit into the desert. He was in communion and the Spirit led the matter in him. He was indeed abiding in the shade of the almighty. This is most achievable through prayer.

**So he answered and said to me:
“This *is* the word of the LORD to
Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power,
but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of
hosts.(Zech.4:6)**

3. WE ARE CALLED TO REMAIN WATCHFUL

so as to be able to detect the devil's voice and counteract him with God's word. This is most achievable through fasting. Jesus fasting had also made him spiritually sober such that his flesh was already subjugated and under control. (1 Pet. 5 :8) 'Be vigilant for your enemy...

4. CALLED TO REMAIN IMMERSED IN THE WORD:

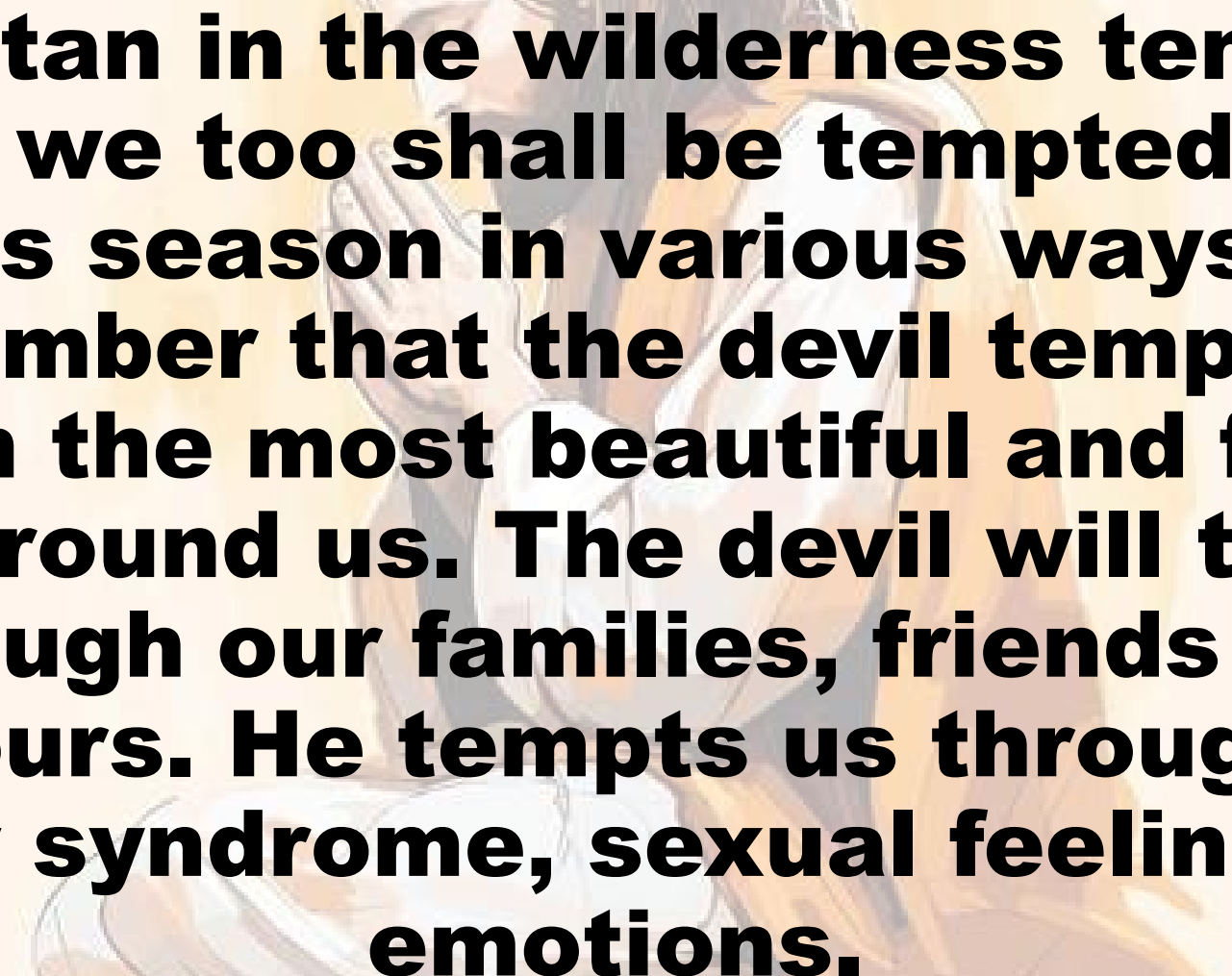
This is the only way in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ. Jesus was so immersed in the Scriptures that he had the appropriate response for any situation, from the Scripture. It was not about what he wanted but about what God wanted. Standing on the Word, he conquered the propensity to selfishness.

(Ephesians 6:11-16)

Put on God's full armor and stand in the power of God's Word

5. LEARN THAT DEVIL APPEARS IN A FAMILIAR FORM

As Satan in the wilderness tempted Christ, we too shall be tempted by the devil this season in various ways. Let us remember that the devil tempts us through the most beautiful and familiar things around us. The devil will tempt us through our families, friends and neighbours. He tempts us through quick money syndrome, sexual feelings and emotions.



CONCLUSION

Christ going into the wilderness signifies a place of emptiness and isolation. As such, we like Christ shall lack comfort, convenience and consolation this season of lent. We will need to give up many things in order to travel light on this forty-day journey.

ASSIGNMENTS

BIBLE STUDY FOR LENT

- **Week 1 Study Mark 14:1–25.**
- **Week 2 Study Mark 14:26–50.**
- **Week 3 Study Mark 14:51–72.**
- **Week 4 Study Mark 15:1–21.**
- **Week 5 Study Mark 15:22–47.**
- **Week 6 Study Mark 16:1–20.**

OUR WEBSITE

**[www.immaculateconception
catholicchurch.com.ng](http://www.immaculateconceptioncatholicchurch.com.ng)**

PRAYER FOR THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL GROWTH OF OUR PARISH

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of creation. From age to age you raise people for yourself. We thank you for the growth and achievements that we have attained so far as a family of Immaculate Conception Catholic parish. United in Jesus Christ, you form us as a parish with the mission of nurturing disciples through faith and human development, hospitality, prayer, and service. Groom us until we become equipped disciples empowered to serve.

We pray for our pastoral team, the parish priest, the pastoral council, and all leaders of organizations and societies. In their decisions and choices, grant them the wisdom to always understand your divine plan for us as a people. May they always be guided by the Holy Spirit as you build us up for your glory.

PRAYER FOR THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL GROWTH OF OUR PARISH

Lord Jesus, we commit our present and future projects to you. We beg you, to provide the resources we need to build a befitting place of worship for you. Please bless us and give us a generous heart moved by faith and trust.

Dearest Mary immaculate, please intercede for us before your son Jesus Christ, that our journey as a Christian people might win us eternity. Amen

Mary immaculate, mediatrix of all graces

pray for us

THE JUBILEE PRAYER

Father in heaven, may the *faith* you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of *charity* enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed *hope* for the coming of your Kingdom. May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

PILGRIMS

THE JUBILEE PRAYER

May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally. May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

