

## First Sunday of Lent

My beloved brothers and sisters, I have often wondered: Why did Jesus go into the wilderness for Forty days? The Gospel tells us that He was driven into the desert by the Holy Spirit after His Baptism in the Jordan by John. As I was praying about this, I remembered my own experience of growing up as a teenager in the desert country of Las Cruces, New Mexico. It receives only about 8" of rain in a years time. It is a stark, lonely, lovely, but dangerous place. The early Spanish Conquistadors on the way to Santa Fe, New Mexico from Mexico City called the area: "La Jornada del Muerte"; the Journey of Death. And yet, I always found the Desert to be a place of wonder and solitude; its vast emptiness, for me, was a place of grandeur and a place filled with the beauty and mystery of God.

I think Jesus went there, because He was seeking the solitude and emptiness of the desert as a time to empty Himself and to listen to the Father as He was seeking the Father's will in beginning His Divine Ministry; and so, He comes out of the Desert proclaiming His Divine Mission: "Repent and believe the good news of God!"

With these words, Jesus begins the time of the Fulfillment of all of God's promises, by God entering into our Human Reality. In Jesus, we see the fulfillment of mankind's oldest and deepest desire that was lost by the first sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve: to see the face of God once more!

With Jesus begins the third and final period of human history, in which God actually enters into human time and space, first, in the Incarnation of God into Human flesh in Jesus, and then through Him, His life is extended through all of time and space through the life of the Church and its Sacraments. Jesus is the fulfillment of mankind's deepest need- to be filled with the very intimacy of God's personal presence, which will be brought to its conclusion in His final coming at the end of time!

During Lent, we too are called to enter into the desert with Jesus, to confront the most essential need of the human spirit- Divine Intimacy with our Creator. It is a time to strip away everything that is not essential in this life, for what is most

essential, to repent, meaning: to radically depend upon God for everything once again. It is a time to change our hearts and minds about God, our relationships, and ourselves- to refocus our lives, by staking our lives upon the Lord, and everything He teaches us that is true and necessary for our salvation! It is a time to turn away from our self-centeredness and selfishness, and to break those habits which tear us away from God and others and our freedom. It is a time to return to radical trust in Jesus and His Divine will for us made clear to us in our daily lives and the events of our lives. It is a time to become transparent to God and to His work in us through the Sacrament of Confession and by serious prayer, fasting from those things we do not need but think we need, and by acts of love. It is a time to re-experience the unconditional mercy and love that God wants to pour out into thirsty souls! So then, this is the question: are you ready to repent and to believe the Good News of God? Are you ready to do all that He asks you to do! Then, Let us God into the Desert with Him!