

1st Sunday of Lent
March 1, 2009

In this season of Lent we remember the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness before beginning His public ministry. Our observance of the season is our symbolic attempt to join the Lord in fasting and in prayer as we reflect on how we might better serve God in our own lives. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. The Spirit leads us into the wilderness of our own minds and hearts.

There we will also come upon wild beasts that dwell within us, as well as angelic spirits. There we will also be tempted by Satan. This is an important, if not often discussed, part of Lent. Temptation can be very helpful to us if we examine it rather than succumb to it. Temptation can be exposed for the lie or deception it is when we shine the light of prayer upon it.

Actually, temptation becomes stronger as we seek or make spiritual progress. When we are apathetic, or do not put much effort into our spiritual growth, Satan does not bother with us much. He probably feels it will not take a lot of effort to ultimately snag our souls. But when we move closer to God, he gets a little anxious and tries a little harder to distract us, deceive us, or frustrate us, so that we will give up the quest.

Fighting temptation is a battle we must risk in conversion of heart. But if we can resist the devil's ploys, they can be helpful. For they reveal to us our weaknesses and the areas most in need of bringing before the Lord in prayer for healing and strengthening.

Facing temptation is a crucial part of spiritual growth. And there are times in the battle with temptation that we will lose. Christ knows and understands that. This is why the sacrament of reconciliation is so important. It binds us up and heals us so we can return to the battle, stronger in the scar tissue from our healing. A good Lent is often filled with battling temptation. It is usually a sign of progress.

Be careful if you feel temptation has stopped in your life. It is not a blessing. The devil never stops working. If he is not working on you it might be a sign that he feels he already has you all sewn up...

God bless you.

Fr. Pat