Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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"He ate nothing during those days ... and he was hungry" (Luke 4:2).

First Sunday of Lent

Dt 26:4-10; Ps 91; Rom 10:8-13; Lk 4:1-13

Jesus' 40-day fast in the desert after his baptism is meant to remind us of the 40 years the Hebrews spent in the desert before they entered the promised land. Jesus' encounter with Satan and the temptations he faced were like the temptations the people faced as they struggled to obey their covenant with God.

But, when the people were hungry, they grumbled against God. When they lost faith in God's providence, they made a golden calf to worship. When they were frustrated, they demanded signs. Because of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, they prolonged their journey in the desert for 40 years, and an entire generation passed away before their children were ready to cross the Jordan River into the land of Canaan.

So, Jesus recreates the history of Israel. When he is baptized, he recalls their passage through the Red Sea in the Exodus. In the desert, each time they failed, he remains faithful. He emerges from the desert ready to begin his ministry as God's Servant. The devil has failed to divert Jesus' commitment to serve God by trying to lure him into false versions of the Messiah, one who will complete his mission by earthly power and miracles. The standoff in the desert is an exchange of scriptural passages, revealing that even the devil can use the Bible to confuse us, tempting us

to do the wrong thing for the right reason or the right thing for the wrong reason.

Lent is our time to train for discipleship. We fast to purify our desires and clarify our central calling. Fasting gets our attention, exposes habits of gratification, our lack of self-control and focus. But the heart of obedience is to listen to the Holy Spirit. Listening with regular prayer purified by fasting will keep us on track. God wants to tell us who we are and what we must do to fulfill our baptismal identity and purpose.

Find the desert place in your own heart, clear away every distraction, all the voices within that clamor for attention and satisfaction. Seek God in silence, and listen to the only voices that matters, the Word and the Spirit. As the terrible war in Ukraine intensifies, we are invited to pray and fast for all its victims, ourselves included. The fate of the world will be shaped by its outcome. Lent 2022 has begun with ashes and in deadly earnest.

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