

Lent Reflection 1

February 26, 2023, 1st Sunday of Lent

Ash Wednesday Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022223.cfm>

Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

First Sunday of Lent: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022623.cfm>

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14, 17; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Where Are You Now?

Like Jesus, we are “led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.”

On Ash Wednesday, the words of the prophet Joel exhort us to,
“Blow the trumpet in Zion! proclaim a fast, call an assembly ... “

And so, we gathered: the old and the young, women and men, parents and children, the ignorant and the learned, the seekers and the complacent, the people we know and the people we’ve never seen before.

We gathered to receive the cross on our foreheads in ashes. Ashes that became a sign to us of our own mortality, and a sign to the world that there are still those who choose to walk in the ways of the Lord, a people who see the urgent need to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the gospel!

We gathered to be sent, to be sent out into a desert to be tempted. It is a desert of our own making as well as a desert presented to us by the world in which we live.

We choose to make our own desert for these forty days, by naming and eliminating the things that get in our way – the pleasures that keep us focused on ourselves instead of seeking the true joy that comes from God; the foods that keep us so satisfied that we don’t see the physical and emotional hunger in the people around us at the same time that we ignore our own hunger for God; the activities that keep us so busy that we tell ourselves we don’t have the time to do what God is calling us to do.

It is a desert that is presented to us by the world in which we live: a world of pollution and climate change; a world of hunger and poverty; a world of oppression and injustice; a world that is, in many ways, another world of our own making, a world that we are presenting to future generations.

So ... where are you now? Are you at the beginning of just another Lent that will make no difference, or only a superficial difference, in your life? Or, are you setting out into the desert, armed with faith, (however shaky it may be now), armed with scripture (no matter how little you may know now) and armed with courage (even if you’re rather timid now) to let this Lent transform you so that at the end of these forty days, you’ll be ready to transform our families, our parish and our world?