

A Time of Renewal

1st Reading: Dt 26:4-10

| **2nd Reading:** Rom 10:8-13 |

Gospel; Lk 4:1-13

GROW: Today's readings can help us enter more deeply into this season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. They are a reminder that Lent isn't primarily about us, as if it were a self-improvement project, but about taking the opportunity to go deeper into our relationship with God. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are ways of reducing distractions in our life and focusing on God's mercy, his sacrifice for us, and his generosity and love. If, for example, you are one who likes things well organized and makes plans, the readings challenge us to look beyond ourselves, beginning with prayer, and ask the Lord to help us grow in faith. Paul writes, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Jesus exemplifies this dependence on God, allowing himself to be led to the desert by the Spirit. Each time the devil tempts him, he responds and in turn shows us how to respond: by turning to God and God's words, the source of our strength. As we choose how to observe the next 35 days, we are reminded to ask God to help us find those things that help draw us closer to him.

GO: What comes to mind when you picture a desert? I imagine sand, heat, thirst. It's more challenging to examine the landscape of my personal desert – barren places of prayer or too much focus on the details of everyday life. Lent, however, presents a rich opportunity to pause and reprioritize our lives based on Jesus' words in today's Gospel: "You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve." Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving can help us do that, reminding us of our dependence on God and helping us shift our focus from ourselves to God and others. How we observe and experience Lent will differ for each of us. Whatever our personal desert looks like, we can rest assured that God will help us find our way back to him.

ACCOMPANIMENT: Find an accountability partner for Lent who can help you stay the course these next 40 days. Perhaps you can pray together each day, or simply send a text sharing how God is working in and through you in this penitential season. **Our parish Lenten faith-sharing groups** could be a way to keep yourself spiritually accountable.