

**Readings Deuteronomy 26: 4-10; Romans 10: 8-13; Luke 4: 1-13**



**Fr Michael says:**

How do we feel as we enter Lent, is it a time to which we look forward? Most of us have a sort of dread, I expect, anything but not enjoyable! Yet it is a time when we are drawn into the Lord's Risen life as we seek to live our lives to the full: recognising our good points, for us to develop and use more generously and when we examine our consciences seeing in what we see are failures, opportunities for growth and development too! This is the lesson we are invited to learn from Deuteronomy, as we give thanks for the first fruits, God's generosity shown to us especially through the Exodus experience. Our focus in life is Christ Himself, as Paul reminds the Christians of Rome – He is our Saviour! Jesus shows us the way to respond to temptation and overcome our sinfulness.

Jesus is put into a desert, which despite its harshness is a great place for reflection and prayer – it gives Him a great sense of awakening, for His Mission and how He is supported by God and can move forward, as we can if we adopt the same approach. We must never forget that temptation – no matter how strong – is never sinful! Sinfulness only arises with us holding on to the temptation and allowing it to take over and lead us away from God. The solitude which Jesus found becomes for Him the means of refreshing and re-establishing Himself. We too need to create a “sacred space” for us to enter and find ourselves again.

We are so easily lost in the rat race of life – we have to renew our priorities in life, how we live our lives in the light of the coming of the Kingdom – we are called to meet the Lord in the reality of our daily lives. We have many questions about the state we are in and unless we can create this space, we are just going to go around in circles. Once we are there we can re-establish ourselves, see where we are with God and our world and take full responsibility for our lives, before the Lord. We are then in a position to face up to ourselves and find our relationship with others, as Thomas Merton puts it: “Only in solitude and silence can I find the gentleness with which I can love my brothers and sisters.”

Hence our Lenten efforts are two fold: to grow into ourselves more through the use we make of our gifts and talents for the Lord and others, who need our prayer, especially the stranger: new parishioners, visitors, or people from different cultures and backgrounds. The criterion that the Bible gives for the reality of our response, is measured by the way we welcome all who cross our threshold, through our Door of Mercy and your own front doors which are also doors of mercy to your neighbourhood. This is further sustained by our sharing what we have with others, according to need and what we can do to address the many situations through which we live each week of our lives. By our conversion of ourselves and remembering that we too have been strangers in different situations, we can reach out with empathy as we can have some idea of how they are feeling. May the Lord bless our efforts of welcome and outreach this coming week!