

PASTORAL COUNCIL

Thoughts For Reflection

February 14, 2016

Forty Days

In today's epic Gospel scene, Jesus relives, in His flesh, the history of Israel.

We've already seen that, like Israel, Jesus has passed through water, been called God's beloved Son. Now, as Israel was tested for forty years in the wilderness, Jesus is led into the desert to be tested for forty days and nights.

He faces the temptations put to Israel: Hungry, He's tempted to grumble against God for food. As Israel quarreled at Massah, He's tempted to doubt God's care. When the Devil asks His homage, He's tempted to do what Israel did in creating the golden calf.

Jesus fights the Devil with the Word of God, three times quoting from Moses' lecture about the lessons Israel was supposed to learn from its wilderness wanderings.

Why do we read this story on the first Sunday of Lent? Because like the biblical sign of forty (*see Genesis 7:12; Exodus 24:18; 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8; Jonah 3:4,*) the forty days of Lent are a time of trial and purification.

Lent is to teach us what we hear over and over in today's readings: "Call upon me, and I will answer," the Lord promises in today's Psalm. Paul promises the same thing in today's Epistle.

This was Israel's experience, as Moses reminds his people in today's First Reading: "We cried to the Lord...and He heard." But each of us is tempted, as Israel was, to forget the great deeds He works in our lives, to neglect our birthright as His beloved sons and daughters.

Like the litany of remembrance Moses prescribes for Israel, we should see in the Mass a memorial of our salvation, and we should "bow down in His presence," offering ourselves in thanksgiving for all He has given us.

(Dr. Scott Hahn, Reflections on This Sunday's Readings)