

'OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS'

1st Sunday Lent Year C – 10th March 2019

THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY OF LIFE & THE LENTEN JOURNEY WITH GOD

What do we learn about god and about ourselves in the wilderness journey of life?

And how will we journey with god during these 40 days of lent?

We reflect with four steps.

A FOUR-STEP REFLECTION

1. From history, we read and ponder on a Franciscan reflection on this 800th anniversary year of Saint Francis of Assisi's journey to Egypt.
2. From the Old Testament we learn from two chapters In the book of Deuteronomy about journeying in faith. Jesus quotes from these two Chapters today's Gospel.
3. From today's Gospel of Luke 4:1-13 we read and pray about the threefold temptation faced by Jesus in the wilderness.
4. We reflect on the wilderness and the three temptations as they may challenge us.

800TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR CONTINUES

Last week we remembered that 2019 is the 800th anniversary of Saint Francis visiting the Sultanal-Malik al-Kamil in Egypt.

Let us reflect on four extracts from the ['Letter of the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor on the 800th Anniversary of the Encounter between St. Francis and Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil.'](#)

'Eight hundred years ago, our Seraphic Father St. Francis set sail for Egypt, finally fulfilling a long-held dream of reaching out to Muslims. He arrived at the camp of the crusading army, among Latin Christians who through years of preaching and the rhetoric of holy war had been taught to scorn Muslims. Those same Muslims had every reason to scorn Francis, assuming that he, like most in the crusader camp, was an enemy and not a bearer of peace. We today celebrate what no one at that moment could have foreseen: that a Spirit-filled man with nothing of his own crossed the battle lines unarmed to request a meeting with the Sultan, was received with grace by that Sultan, enjoyed an extended period of hospitality with the Muslim leader, and emerged from the visit to reflect anew on the mission of the Friars Minor.'

And some of the actions this year include:

'In April, the General Curia will make available an online resource book, prepared by the Special Commission for Dialogue with Islam, that provides historical background, Franciscan and Muslim perspectives on the encounter and other materials to commemorate Damietta. Our fraternity in Istanbul, a community of Friars primarily dedicated to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, will host a gathering in October of Friars working in Muslim-majority countries. The Pontifical University Antonianum has likewise organized several public events in different countries over the course of the anniversary year...'

The Franciscan General Minister continues:

'Fidelity to Francis's vision involves sharing with humility. Indeed, the distinctively Christian gift we have to share with our Muslim sisters and brothers is not merely a humble Christian, but the experience of a humble God. Unique in his age, Francis praised God by saying, "You are humility" (PrsG 4), and spoke about the "sublime humility," the "humble sublimity" of God (LtOrd 27). The Christian heart's quest for God finds rest in the humility of the crib and the cross, signs of a God who stoops down in service and humbles himself for love of us. Francis invites us to reflect that divine humility to those we meet by taking the first step in service and in love...'

'In conclusion, let us never forget that the example of St. Francis was a life of ongoing conversion...'

Like St Francis we are called to a journey

- ± of humility,
- ± of ongoing conversion,
- ± of trust in God,
- ± of the crib and the cross,
- ± of growing to know and love God who is humble.

DEUTERONOMY

The Old Testament reveals the journey of the Israelite people, including their experience of God during the exodus and the 40 years in the wilderness.

In the Book of Deuteronomy Chapter 6 we hear:

- *'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.'*

*Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.
Recite them to your children and talk about them
when you are at home and when you are away,
when you lie down and when you rise.
Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead,
and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates....'*

- *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.
You must diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God,
and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you.
Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, so that it may go well with
you'.*

In Deuteronomy Chapter 8 we hear:

- *'Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you
these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you,
testing you to know what was in your heart,
whether or not you would keep his commandments.
He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna,
with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted,
in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.'
The clothes on your back did not wear out
and your feet did not swell these forty years.'*
- *'then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,
who led you through the great and terrible wilderness,
an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions.
He made water flow for you from flint rock,
and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know,
to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good.
Do not say to yourself,
'My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.'*

GOSPEL OF LUKE 4:1-13

Remembering the passages above from Deuteronomy,
we now have a background to appreciate why Jesus quotes
from these two chapters as he faces the temptations that we are all face in some way.

*In response to the 1st temptation, Jesus quotes the Word in Deuteronomy 8:3
In response to the 2nd temptation, Jesus quotes the Word in Deuteronomy 6:13
In response to the 3rd temptation, Jesus quotes the Word in Deuteronomy 6:16*

Let us now read the Gospel slowly.

'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.'

*Jesus answered him,
 '**It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."***

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'

*Jesus answered him,
 'It is written,
 "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."*

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.'

INSIGHTS FROM TUESDAY EVENING'S DISCUSSION WITH A PARISH GROUP

The Gospel reminds us that part of journey of life is the wilderness journey.

In the Gospel we deepen our understanding.

In this reflection ***we draw upon insights into this Gospel passage from parish members at last Tuesday evening discussion.***

Insights include:

- One reflected on the experience of the Holy Spirit in his life, and our need to beware of the disease of to be egotism. The Gospel passage shows how deep is the love of Jesus for the Father, that he does not succumb to the temptations, and this inspires us more in our love for God.

- Another reflected on the three responses of Jesus and how we need to turn more to the Scriptures, and to trust God.
- Another spoke of vulnerability and that the devil targeted what was foremost in the mind of Jesus – his vocation. He spoke about getting our power from God, and giving over our self to God.
- Another reflected on living in a country of poverty and hardship where the faith was strong. And then coming to Australia where there is abundance and the temptation to put God aside. And finding the material abundance satisfying, and later wanting more and more. And finally letting the Holy Spirit back into his life.
- Another spoke of the trust in God during a pregnancy and loving deeply the child in the womb.
- Another reflected on early troubles in life and later realizing what was he worried about, as God had been there trying to help him.
- Another spoke of the relationship between trust and love, and praying to God for perfect trust in God's love. And that mercy cost Jesus everything (his life) yet his mercy was freely given.
- Another summed up the group discussion by saying that they had been giving examples of **Trust** through their experiences of life.

THE WILDERNESS & THE TEMPTATIONS

Jesus trusted in the Father.

In overcoming the temptations in life, we need to trust in God.

Let us now reflect on the three temptations again.

To misuse and abuse his **power** by turning the stone into bread.

To misuse and abuse his **authority** by seeking to possess and dominate the kingdoms of the world.

To misuse and abuse his **life and mission** by challenging the Father to conform to him.

Do we trust in the love of God, or do we trust in the power of evil?

Do we serve God, or do we serve our ambitions?

Do we love God, or do we use God?

Do we freely show mercy, even when there is a cost?

Do we follow Jesus, or do we expect Jesus to follow us?

Are we humble like Jesus, or do we believe the world revolves around us?

The responses of Jesus are again repeated:

Deuteronomy 8:3 *"One does not live by bread alone."*

Deuteronomy 6:13 *"Worship the Lord your God and serve only him."*

Deuteronomy 6:16 *"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."*

Jesus in the wilderness was full of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray that we be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/031019.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook10032019>]

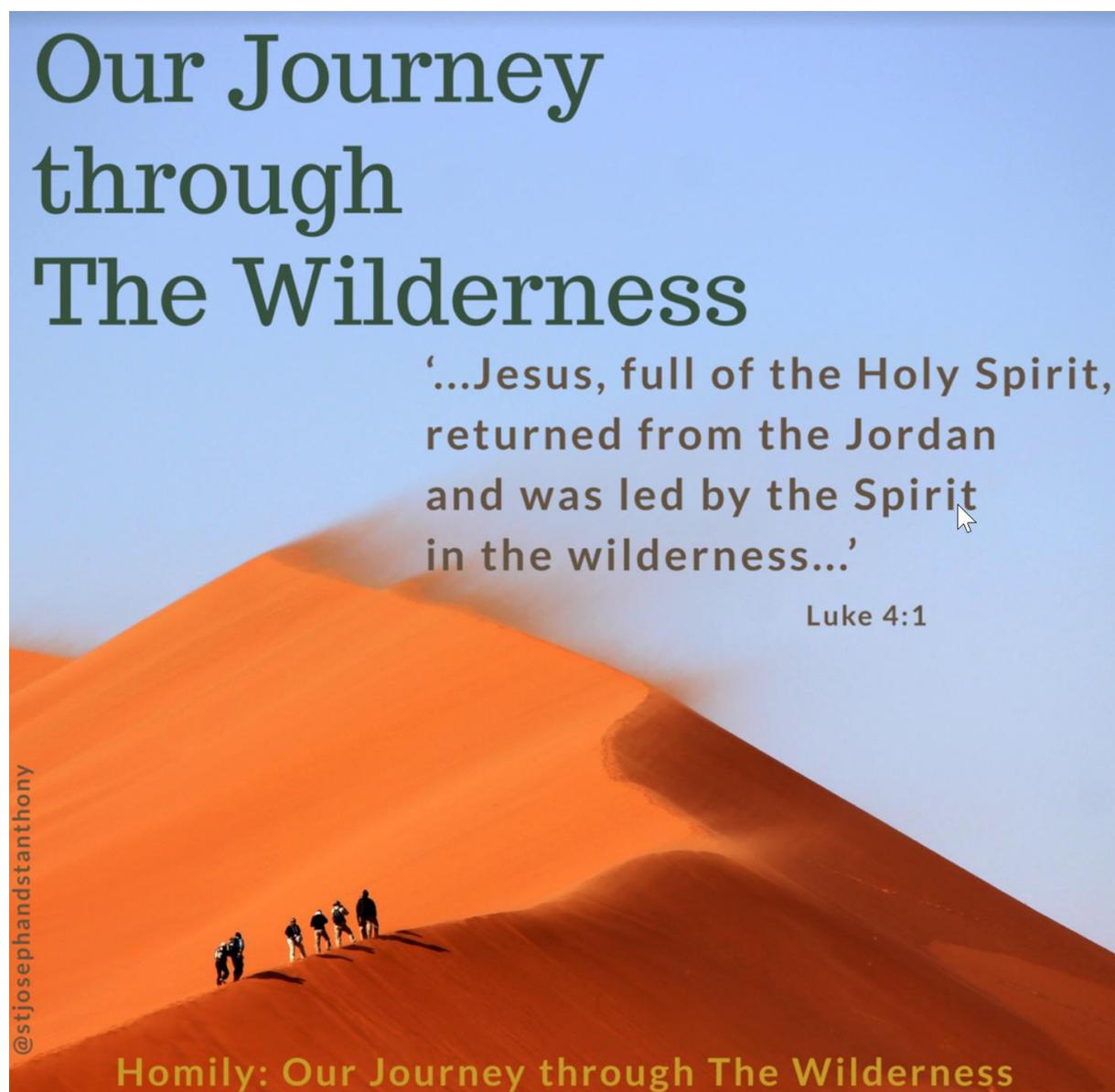


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