

# Lent 2023

First Sunday

*Connecting to the reality of the world...*



*Desert - a space to be filled.*

*“The desert does not mean the absence of men;  
it means the presence of God”.*

*- Carlo Carretto*

[Song: Let me hear, Sounds of Eternal, Philip Newell.](#)

Lent is an invitation to receive Jesus the Lord in a special way. **At the beginning of Lent, pray for the grace** to experience the presence of God during this time and to stay compassionate with those suffering from various abuses, injustices, and wars...

Prayer really means to open up your mind and heart to a loving God who thirsts to become close and once again one with you. It is recognizing that Jesus has come to show us the way, to deepen our love and intimacy with the Father, with the Son, one with Jesus, sharing the love of the Holy Spirit.

***Jesus calls us to a personal encounter with Him.***

***He wants to make known to us the feelings and the preferences of His Heart.***  
(§18 Const.)

## **The Spirit led Jesus out into the desert. (Matthew 4:1)**

Imagine a desert - empty, harsh, unfriendly; a desolate, empty, and unfriendly place. A place that requires increased effort to survive.

Today's Gospel invites us to go out into the desert of silence, in order to be filled.

During his baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus. He is anointed with Him and is guided by Him. And this Spirit leads Jesus into the desert.

When a person allows himself to be led by the Spirit, the Spirit can lead him to various places, even places he would never go himself.

To allow oneself to be led by the Spirit is to go sometimes into the unknown. To permit oneself to be led by the Spirit, so that to be with victims of abuse, to accompany those who are hurt and excluded.



## **The Spirit led Him into the desert.**

Reflect on the desert in your life. Try to look at it in a different dimension than you usually do. The desert as a time/period in my life, the desert as a place, the desert as an environment or a specific relationship, the desert as increased commitment/concrete hardship, the desert in another dimension.

***What kind of desert are you experiencing in your life right now?***

## And he stayed in the desert for forty days and finally He felt hunger....

Jesus is experiencing a humanly difficult time, and the time is not short at all. Be with Jesus in this prayer, be close to Him.

"I really see no other solution than to turn inwards and to root out all the rottenness there. I no longer believe that we can change anything in the world until we first change ourselves. And that seems to me the only lesson to be learned." *Etty Hillesum*

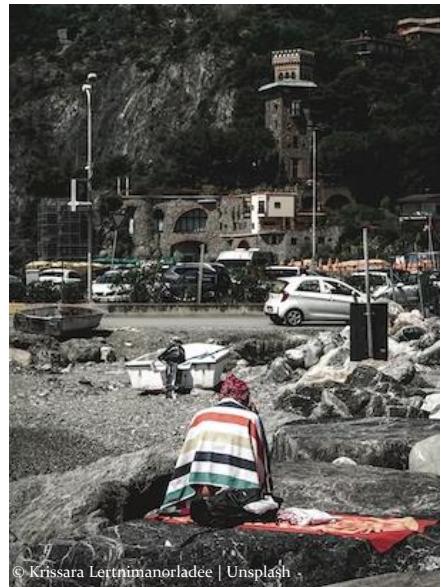
*To receive others with their suffering I must be empty;  
to let their stories could fill me inside,  
to make room for their life within me  
to make room for the life of God in myself.*

Look now at the wounded world, at recent events in which humanity is experiencing immeasurable suffering – wars... disasters... abuses of power... hunger... people on the move...



*Look at all this through the eyes of Jesus and ask what happens in His heart when He sees the suffering of humanity and the suffering of the earth? What does He feel?  
Fill your heart with the feelings of Jesus' Heart.*

[Song: The cry of the poor, by John Foley SJ](#)



"As we hear and respond to the cry of the poor and of wounded earth, we see the effect of unbridled power, especially when it is driven by greed, domination, and callous indifference. As we stand with the weak and oppressed, engage in efforts to bring about structural change in our local and global context, advocate for a more just, humane society and an ecologically balanced world, we are confronted with the reality that power, without justice, is destructive and death – dealing." (*Being Artisans of Hope in Our Blessed and Broken World*, p.8)

"Let us listen to the truth of these victims of violence, let us look at reality through their eyes and listen to their stories with an open heart. In this way, we will be able to recognize the abyss of evil that lies at the heart of war, and we will not be disturbed to be called naive for having chosen peace." (*Fratelli Tutti*, § 261)

Take a moment now to consider these different moments of power.

*What calls and invitations are awakened in you?  
How do you respond to these intuitions?  
Are you called to new ways of responding?*

[Song: Who will speak if you don't, by Marty Haugen](#)

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