

Introduction to the day

These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues, to receive the gifts of God's grace, to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God's love in Jesus, and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and word, will uphold and sustain us.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW p. 215)

Let us pray.

O Lord God, you led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide us now, so that, following your Son, we may walk safely through the wilderness of this world toward the life you alone can give, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

A reading from Deuteronomy.

The annual harvest festival, called the Feast of Weeks, provides the setting for this reading. This festival celebrates the first fruits of the produce of the land offered back to God in thanks. In this text, worshipers announce God's gracious acts on behalf of Israel.

PSALM: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

God will give the angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways. (Ps. 91:11)

SECOND READING: Romans 10:8b-13

A reading from Romans.

Paul reminds the Christians at Rome of the foundation of their creed, the confession of faith in the risen Christ as Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 4:1-13

After being filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, Jesus is led in the wilderness. Through his responses to the temptations of the devil, he defines what it means to be called "the Son of God."

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT - Journeying through the Wilderness

The wilderness has captured the imaginations of artists, adventurers, and spiritual seekers for thousands of years. It can be a place of profound self-discovery, exploration, beauty, and solitude. It is a place of few distractions: no commerce, no schedule, no business as usual. The wilderness can be a freeing place that opens us up to experience life in new and profound ways.

However, the wilderness is also disorienting and lonely. The landscape can be brutal and unforgiving. Wilderness wanderers can easily find themselves lost, exhausted, and dirty. The unbearable heat of the day, the uncomfortable cold of the nights, and the lack of food, water, or shade can bring people to their breaking point. The wilderness has been a place of exile and punishment, and a place where people's strength, determination, and faith are put to the test.

The complexities of the wilderness set the stage for today's gospel story, in which we get a glimpse of who Jesus is and who he is called to be. In the wilderness, we see the depth of Jesus' faith. Jesus is not swayed by

the allure of power, control, authority, or physical comfort. He does not buy into the tempter's lies. Even in the disorientation and isolation of the wilderness, Jesus trusts in the Spirit, who has led him to this place and who gives him the strength to live into his call throughout his journey.

We are at the beginning of our own journey, a Lenten season of metaphorical wilderness wandering. The good news is that we do not go alone. The Spirit goes before us, behind us, beside us, and within us. Along this journey, the many voices of the tempter may try to lure us in with power, control, authority, or comfort. And yet, our trust and our identities lie with the One who already defeated the tempter. We already have all we need. In Christ, we are already loved, forgiven, and made whole, no matter where our journeys take us.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Gracious God, speak your word anew among your church. Strengthen it to withstand the temptation to turn inward in fear or complacency. Embolden church institutions to turn from self-preservation toward the self-giving love of Jesus. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Mothering God, speak the word of life into wilderness places and fertile fields. Grant wisdom to your people, that we may quell the urge to strip lands of their resources and instead preserve first fruits for future generations. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Almighty God, speak a word of wisdom to people in positions of power: mayors, councils, and tribal leaders, legislators, judges and juries, presidents, and monarchs. Help them discern your voice and follow your guidance, resisting the temptations of the evil one. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Steadfast God, speak words of courage to your people in the wilderness. Protect migrants and refugees on perilous journeys, that they find safe refuge and a portion in the bounty you have given humanity to share. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Loving God, speak gently to all who are alone. Bless lay ministers, home communion teams, and others who attend to those who are overlooked, vulnerable, or lonely, that all find belonging in your love. We pray for all who are ill especially Linda Boland, Sandra Gagnon, Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Cassie Jessup, Bill Lorbetzkie, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, Elaine Yourth, Stephanie Yourth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or from the silence of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need you healing touch (pause) God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Living God, we give thanks for all the faithful who have crossed the threshold from death to life. Guide us who are living to learn from their wisdom and follow their example. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

Thanks be to God.

Leave in silence

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