

# *Spiritual Food*

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## **“Every tree is known by its fruit”**

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Jesus says in today's gospel: “We see the speck in another's eye, but we don't see the log in our own.” And notice the difference, a speck compared to a log. A little fault compared with a really big one. Why are we like that? Is it because we are naturally jealous? Or envious? Or basically negative and critical? And we have lived with our own faults for so many years that we have grown accustomed to them, or perhaps have never known that we had the problem?

Christian living requires work, lots of sacrifice, discipline and love. It takes heroic love to real the Beatitudes in our relationships. It's not really easy to be

poor, to be merciful, to be meek, to be peacemakers, to hunger and thirst for justice. It takes a lot of courage to be persecuted and ridiculed and mocked for being authentic Christians, for being Christ like.

This is how we become be a sign to all outsiders observing us of radical inclusiveness, where all were equal regardless of social and economic standing.

Soon we will begin again the Lenten journey to our baptismal waters for renewal. We will commit ourselves again to our journey in community with Christ and each other.

This will be a time of important reflection make and recommitment. Like Luke's community, we continually need to hear

again the instructions of the Teacher. This should be our goal during Lent; this is our hope at each Eucharist shared together - that we will have our hearts and minds shaped by the Lord so that we can become more and more like him.





## **“Finding Strength in the Desert”**

The Season of Lent begins with the Gospel Reading of Jesus' temptations in the desert. The Lord ventured out into the wilderness for 40 days - a time He needed to spend alone in the presence of His Father. We imagine that He needed this time - to reflect, to pray, to prepare for the ministry that He came to Live.

The temptations of Christ in the desert are our temptations as well.



- We are all tempted to seek more than we need; "Man does not live by bread alone'." The Lord tells us. The Word and The Eucharist are sufficient to sustain us as a community.

- "All these kingdoms will be yours, if..." We are all called to be righteous and use whatever power we have for the good of others. Yet it's easy for us to become self-righteousness, content with our own answers and solutions.
- There are days when we feel like giving up - when we ask ourselves why we even bother... throwing ourselves down, throwing in the towel becomes an easy way out. But Jesus tells us by example not to give up, to keep going - even in the midst of uncertainty.

Let this Lent become for you a desert experience. Take the chance, venture out into the darkness. Take some time to pray, to "reach out in the darkness," to reflect - to let the Father speak. (That means we have to listen!)

Let this season become the point which will buoy you when times seem at their lowest, when you feel your loneliest or when you recognize your weakness most acutely.

Let us all learn from the example of Jesus: pray, reflect, prepare for the Easter victory, and return from our personal desert experience prepared - perhaps just a little better - to face the daily reality of our lives.





## **“Knowing God Is Near”**

Our journey of faith was one of living our lives "according to God's plan", of accepting our state in life - whatever it may be - as part of His will for us, and submitting to the sometimes unreasonable demands that we seem to think He makes upon us. The soul is spirit, noble, most God-like; the flesh is lowly, corruptible, and definitely mortal. We were trained to struggle against the desires of the body, to subdue, to repress. Our ultimate goal is our reunion with our God in the heavenly kingdom; our earthly journey is one of "earning" our citizenship in heaven.

In the Gospel passage, Luke allows us to become witnesses, with Peter, James and John, of the Lord's transfiguration:



The Apostles witnessed a dazzling display of God's glory at the Transfiguration and were overwhelmed with excitement; but they were soon to experience the passion and death of Jesus. These same three will follow Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane. They will see Him, fearful, saddened, pleading not to have to suffer and die. They will see Him on the cross, apparently abandoned by his Father and overcome by evil. This will betray all their hopes and dreams, and almost destroy their faith.

Through faith, we have a foretaste of the glory of Risen Lord, and we must know that it is this same glory that is waiting for us. Today we are challenged to transform our lives - to let the glory of God guide us and shine through us... to focus on God along the rough road of the spiritual path... knowing that God is

near, that He understands our pain, and that He will sustain us and carry us through, beyond our own physical Gethsemane, beyond our Calvary, to the triumph of our Easter.





## **“Never Thirst again”**

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We continue to travel through the season of Lent on our way to celebrate the Easter Vigil. It is a road that we have travelled together within the parish community and again as witnesses to catechumens they prepare to become fully initiated members of the Church at the Easter Vigil.

Jesus never did what folks expected. People called him "rabbi" but He didn't teach with theological treatises - He told strange stories – He never allowed the Law, or tradition, or the "proper thing to do" to take precedence over ministering to His people.

Witness the scene with the Samaritan woman. By all standards, she had no

right to even speak with The Lord. After all, she was part of the outcast group, and a woman, no less! But that didn't stop Jesus from striking up a conversation with her. The disciples were aghast, and no doubt His enemies had more fuel for the fire.

The Samaritans were not evil people. They bore no arms against the people of Galilee, they didn't try to politically undermine society or government; they were not thieves or criminals - they were ordinary people trying to eke out a living just as everyone else. They even worshipped the same God - but they expressed that faith a little differently.

On our Lenten Journey, we try to reach out and freely embrace the Cross. In small ways, we test our willingness to die, to obey, to give up something precious, to pay the price of discipleship.

But we can only do this if we have first experienced the desert. Through our faith, we have a foretaste of the glory of Risen Lord, and we must know that it is that same glory that is waiting for us. Then we can embrace the Life He has promised us - knowing that God is near, God understands our pain, God will sustain us and carry us through, beyond our Gethsemane, beyond our Calvary, to the triumph of our Easter – never to thirst again.





## **“A Light in the Darkness”**

Lent is a time of peace. We know it as a "penitential season" – a time of self-denial, self-sacrifice, a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. Yet all throughout this season, the Church constantly reminds us of the Peace of God. We are reminded of the all-encompassing peace felt by the disciples as they witnessed Christ's Transfigured glory; we shared in the peace felt by the Samaritan woman at the well as she realized that she was in the presence of God. And this week - a man born blind is made to see and to feel the comfort and peace of the Light of the World.

To be consistently persons of faith who take seriously God's promise of peace,

we must be constantly nourished by Word and Sacrament. That's why the celebration of the Eucharist is so central and so indispensable to us. We come to the Table always conscious of our frailty, our infidelity, our selfishness and pride. We come as pilgrims and sinners. We come as those blind to the warmth and light of His goodness.

The mystery of God-With-Us is the final, fullest proof of God's desire to become close to us - to become a part of our very being. In Jesus, the Word becomes our flesh. Every facet of His human journey speaks to us of the nearness of God. He walked with His Father, not only in the Temple, but in the carpenter shop, at the family table, in the desert and on the mountain top. He recognized the image of the Father in the members of His family, in the townspeople of Nazareth, in the poor, the lepers, the crippled, the

deaf and the blind who flocked to Him. He enfleshed the compassion of God in His reaching out to the tax collector, the prostitute, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, the thief on the cross.

The Season of Lent is a constant reminder that He continues to reach out to each and every one of us - not as a vengeful, demanding God but as Light, Hope, Comfort and Peace. We can be no less for one another.

