

Last Wednesday we entered the Holy Season of Lent,
a time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

The Church invites us to walk with Jesus through the desert
and confront the reality of temptation in our own lives.

In today's Gospel from Luke, we find Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,
being led into wilderness where He is tempted by the devil.

This passage is not just about Jesus' struggle
but also a guide for us as we begin our Lenten journey.

Today's Gospel is speaking to you and to me.

As we start this Lenten journey

let us ponder on what St. Paul says in today's readings.

"Brothers & Sisters, what does Scripture say?"

We hear in our 1st Reading from Deuteronomy...

"My father was a wandering Aramean who went to Egypt."

An Aramean is a descendent of Arom, a descendent of Noah.

We are being told by Moses that the people of God
are those descended from Noah who are enslaved in Egypt.

Moses continues the history lesson

with the Exodus story of maltreatment and hard labor

to a people crying out to the God of their fathers.

But God brought them out of Egypt with his strong hand
and gave his people a land of milk and honey.

Moses remembers this history by bringing the first fruits of the harvest and setting them before God as the people's gift.

This feast is called Shavot and is still celebrated today within the Jewish faith.

At the end of the 1st Reading we hear,
"The products of the soil which you, O Lord, have given me.
And having set them before the Lord, your God,
you shall bow down in his presence."

As Catholics we bring the same products of the soil in our gift of bread and wine at this Mass.

We bring them to the altar, and then bow down in the True Presence of our Lord as the Eucharist.

This is our connection to the Old Testament covenants.

As a matter of fact, the Book of Deuteronomy is the connection to the Gospel today.

The Gospel reveals that Jesus faced 3 distinct temptations...

the temptation to satisfy physical hunger...

the temptation to seek worldly power...

and the temptation to test God.

Each answer Jesus gave to the temptations was a direct quote from the Book of Deuteronomy.

In the 1st temptation it is written...

"One does not live on bread alone but by the Word of God."

Jesus' stomach was empty but he was filled with the Holy Spirit and that Spirit led him to the desert for 40 days.

In the 2nd temptation Jesus' response to the devil was...

"You shall worship the Lord your God and him alone shall you serve."

The devil can't offer power he doesn't have.

In the 3rd temptation the devil wanted Jesus to do something spectacular.

Jump off a cliff and have angels catch him.

This was a pointless stunt that would reveal Jesus' identity.

Jesus responded one more time from Deuteronomy...

"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

We all have the same temptations as Jesus.

When we cave into consumerism and obsess over money rather than build up our relationship with God, we are tempted by the devil.

When we assert power or bully someone in a particular class of people, we are tempted by the devil.

When we try to be somebody other than ourselves or live beyond our means to impress neighbors, we are tempted by the devil.

I think it is also important to notice in the *Gospel Reading* that Jesus was "filled with the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness."

This reminds us that we do not face temptation alone.

The same Holy Spirit that empowered Jesus is with each and every one of us today.

Through prayer and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we are strengthened to overcome our weaknesses and grow closer to God.

Not only do we have the Holy Spirit to encourage us we also have each to encourage us through our spiritual life.

A perfect example is the OCIA...

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.

This weekend at the 9:00am Mass, St. Pius will have 2 unbaptized catechumens being presented to Bishop Fleming for the Rite of Election.

Standing with them are their sponsors...

Catholics with the knowledge of the faith...

walking with them on their faith journeys.

At the 11:00am Mass, 10 candidates

(those who have been baptized)

who wish to be in full communion with the Catholic Church

will sign the Book of Enrollment,

with their sponsor standing right beside them.

The OCIA candidates are growing in their faith

just as all of us are encouraged to grow in our faith.

My Brothers and Sisters, Scripture tells us...

"The Word of God is near you...

in your mouth and in your heart."

Go forth on your Lenten Journey

and proclaim God's Word.