

## From The Desk of Fr. Patrick

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On the First Sunday of Lent, the Church invites us to reflect on the Gospel of **Gospel of Matthew 4:1–11**, where Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert and is tempted by the devil. For forty days and forty nights, He fasts and prays. In His hunger and weakness, the devil approaches Him. Yet Jesus responds not with anger or fear, but with the Word of God.

This Gospel reminds us that Lent is our desert journey. We, too, experience temptations, comfort without sacrifice, success without integrity, pleasure without responsibility. Jesus shows us how to remain faithful: by staying close to God.

The first temptation is about bread. Jesus is hungry, and the devil tells Him to turn stones into loaves. But Jesus answers, *“One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”* In daily life, we may be tempted to focus only on material needs, money, comfort, entertainment, forgetting that our souls also need nourishment. Prayer and Scripture feed us in ways that food cannot.

The second temptation invites Jesus to test God’s protection. How often do we demand signs from God? We may say, “If God really loves me, He will fix this problem immediately.” Jesus teaches us trust instead of testing.

The third temptation offers power and glory. In our world, success and recognition can become idols. But Jesus firmly responds, *“The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.”* Lent is a time to examine what we truly worship.

One time, my dad called me and said, “Patrick, I would like you to drink a lot of BEER this Lenten season.” I told him that I do not drink beer, but he answered me in a different way explaining what he meant:

**B- Bible:** Read the Word of God more often.

**E - Eucharist:** Receive the Eucharist as frequently as possible.

**E - Empathy:** Be compassionate and understanding toward others.

**R - Reconciliation:** Be reconciled with God and others, especially through the Sacrament of Confession.

That simple acronym changed the way I see Lent. Instead of focusing only on what we give up, we focus on what we grow in. The Church gives us four pillars to guide our desert journey:

**Prayer** – Try to pray a little more. Attend daily Mass if possible. Spend quiet time before the Blessed Sacrament. Participate in the Stations of the Cross. Prayer strengthens us against temptation, just as it did for Jesus.

**Abstinence** – Catholics age 14 and older abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and the Fridays of Lent. Abstinence teaches discipline and reminds us that we do not live for food alone.

**Fasting** – Fasting means eating less or giving up certain foods or comforts. It helps us detach from excess and depend more on God. **Almsgiving** – Lent calls us to generosity. Share your time, talent, and treasure. Help someone in need. Visit the sick. Support the poor. Charity opens our hearts.

At the end of the Gospel, after the temptations, the angels come and minister to Jesus. When we resist temptation and stay faithful, God strengthens us. Lent is not about sadness; it is about renewal. It is about becoming better people, closer to God, and more loving toward others.

As we begin this holy season, may we walk with Jesus in the desert. Through prayer, sacrifice, and charity, may we grow stronger in faith and remain always close to the Lord. Amen.

-Fr. Patrick