

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT FEB. 18, 2024

Readings: Gen. 9:8-15; 1Pt. 3:18-22; Mk. 1:12-15.

We live in a mobile society. That goes without saying. And sometimes we **forget something on our journey**. Who hasn't left his or her cellphone at home by mistake? Or what student hasn't forgotten his or her homework or backpack or lunch?

Yes, forgetting to **bring necessary things** is an easy thing to do.

Last Wednesday we, as a faith community, **began a journey**. And this journey is a **sacred** journey...forty days in the desert, in imitation of our Lord. And as you know, this holy journey is rarely easy, no matter how many times we have made similar journeys in the past. It requires focus and commitment. It requires patience. It requires perseverance. It requires humility. It requires generosity of heart. And it requires sacrifice. **That's a long list.**

And it would be a shame if we forgot to bring everything we needed, forgot something essential...something that, if left behind, would make our journey a kind of failure. And yet we often do forget the thing we need most. We often forget **"who?"**, God.

If we are not careful, these forty days can be all about us, our accomplishments, **our** will power and our egos.

And that is in no way related to the **spirit of this holy season**.

In today's Gospel passage from Mark, we hear how the Spirit "drove Jesus out into the desert," where he remained for forty days. One thing seems to be clear...Jesus did not go out into the desert alone. He was **motivated by the spirit** to embrace the sacred plan of the Father. And the clarity with which he emerged from that experience, the complete focus he would have in the years ahead, the strength and courage he would muster in the face of adversity and sorrow and pain and disappointment, was only possible **because it was God's Spirit** that was **leading** him and **guiding** him and **empowering** him every step of the way.

And so, it is with us. Lent will never be fruitful **if we try to go it alone**. And even though we can't ever fully understand the **interplay of Father, Son, and Spirit**, one thing is clear...Jesus couldn't do what he did without God, and neither can we.

Put simply ...as we carry out our Lenten observances...as we pray a little more, and give to the poor, and make small sacrifices...let's not see it simply as something we "do". Instead let's **take God with us** into the desert and see what **God wants to "do" in us**