Reflection for the First Sunday of Lent
March 6, 2022

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10
Psalm: 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15
Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13

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Every year the Season of Lent gives us the opportunity to scan our inner self and see what needs a re-set. Our first reading this Sunday subtly reminds us that our ancestors were slaves in the land of Egypt. They cried for help to God the Most High, who brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them to a “land flowing with milk and honey.” During Lent we ask ourselves if we in any way have become content with the “fleshpots of Egypt.” It’s hard to leave behind some of our lazy habits and find ways to serve God and care for our neighbor at the cost of our own comfort and convenience.

At the heart of the matter is our relationship with Christ. First of all, there is the reality that he was born and lived his early life in the town of Nazareth in what we now call the Holy Land. Not much is written about his early life. We assume that since Joseph was a carpenter, Jesus learned the trade and spent his days working with wood. But then he felt called to travel the land as an itinerant preacher with a message of hope: “Behold, the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

It was at the very beginning of his ministry that Jesus was assailed by three temptations. He went into a remote area to fast and pray. We can conjecture that he was trying to work out what sort of ministry God was calling him to. Catching Jesus when he is feeling vulnerable, the Tempter offers him bread to stave off hunger, power to rule all the kingdoms of the world, and ability to work wonders for the sake of human glory. Jesus rejects all three temptations, and keeps his eyes firmly fixed on God, his refuge and fortress, the God in whom he trusts.

While our temptations may not be as dramatic as those of Jesus, we all have faults of one sort or another. We may think of our family members and our old friends, but not take the time to call or write a letter. We may know what is good for our health such as moderate exercise, but prefer to stay in our easy chair and watch television. We may determine to be faithful to daily prayer practices, but pick up the newspaper or a magazine instead. Lent is a time to draw closer to God in whatever way we feel called. It may happen that the Lenten practice will become part of our regular spiritual practice after Easter has come and gone.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta is quoted as saying: “Do something beautiful for God.” This Lent let us open our hearts to let God do something beautiful for us. And may we in turn find ways to pass on the blessing by doing something beautiful for friends and family, and for all those whom we meet.