Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Lent. For adults who are preparing to enter the Church at Easter, today begins the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, a time of prayer and reflection that fosters deepening conversion prior to baptism. Likewise, those who are baptized are called to allow Lent to be a liminal space that transforms us and opens us to new life.

It is fitting that the Gospel for today invites us into the desert with Jesus. Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the liminal space of the desert wilderness to be tempted by Satan. This was not necessarily a desolate place, for the Holy Spirit was with Jesus from his baptism. Might we think of the desert as a place of retreat and renewal where Jesus was confirmed in his identity as the Beloved of God? Where he was strengthened to resist the false promises of the devil and filled with confidence in God’s loving Providence?

Humankind was created for communion with God; for relationship with God and each other. Our human nature trips us up, time and again, as it did Adam and Eve in the garden. Jesus was God’s vital and life-changing gift to humanity. Through Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled with God and each other. Christ’s Spirit dwelling within us empowers and impels us to be bearers of love, mercy and justice for our world.

Year after year, the Church offers this time for purifying our innermost desires – a time for exploring our own inner brokenness; those places within that need conversion and healing. Lent invites us to begin again, to return to God with all our hearts as we look forward to renewing our baptismal promises at Easter.

Let the Holy Spirit lead us into the Lenten wilderness with confidence in our loving God. We trust that Jesus walks with us as we cross this threshold.

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