

A full-page photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with large, textured clouds in shades of orange, red, and yellow. The foreground and middle ground consist of rolling sand dunes. A small, dark silhouette of a person stands on the crest of one of the dunes, looking towards the horizon. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT 2020

Into the desert ...

First Sunday of Lent

From the Readings

Then the serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil. *Genesis 3:4-6*

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
And cleanse me from my sin. *Psalms 51:1-2*

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was hungry ...” *Matthew 4:1-2*

Reflections

Deserts may be difficult places but they also offer silence, space and possibilities:

Lent is about choices. Jesus himself was familiar with that sacred space, the space between refusing and accepting the chalices offered by his Father during his brief life. On his Cross, he chose to forgive his enemies, to even love them. And later, at the moment of his death, after an intense struggle with his terrible doubt, Jesus uttered his whispered 'yes' to his beloved Father before his soul left him. Our most important life choices are rarely obvious or easy. Side by side they look alike, and often live at the same address. *Daniel O'Leary, Unmasking God, 19.*

Only in Silence Does Love Emerge. Many people long for a moment of silence each day. So do I. Without it I'm like a car without a steering wheel. I'm capable of causing immense damage because I'm not balanced in



my heart. I hurt people because I'm not still and quiet enough to hear properly, to grasp the deeper meaning of what they're saying.

Daniel O'Leary, Prism of Love, 43-44.

The very first truth I would tell each of you is this: "God loves you". It makes no difference whether you have already heard it or not. I want to remind you of it. God loves you. Never doubt this, whatever may happen to you in life. At every moment, you are infinitely loved.

Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 112.

Keep your eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified, let yourself be saved over and over again. And when you go to confess your sins, believe firmly in his mercy which frees you of your guilt.

Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 123.

We search ceaselessly for the More of Life

We search ceaselessly for the more of life, contented but not fulfilled.

We live with expectations of tomorrow,
and then find tomorrow not enough as well.

We struggle with our restlessness today.

We go through life with the magnet in our souls
that is meant to bring us home,

wherever in the end, home really is ...

Oh, life makes us happy, yes, but satisfied, no.

We have here a taste of what fullness of life is meant to be

but, at the same time, there is nothing here
that quenches the thirsts or fills all the cravings.

What we have here is only the hint of what we are meant to become.

Joan Chittister, Our Holy Yearnings, 28-29.





For Thinking and Talking

1. **From these readings and reflections**, what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
2. **Imagine** being in a desert. What could you find there?
3. **Remember** a desert time' of your life. What happened?
4. **Express** a hope or intention for the future.

Closing Prayer

God of Courage,
today I place my hand in your hand.
As I journey through Lent,
I will trust in your guidance. Amen.

Joyce Rupp, Inviting God 51.



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