

## Lent 1B

*The Scripture today tells us that the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. When it uses the word 'drove' it suggests to me that the wilderness wasn't exactly the most desirable of places to be. The desert was a time of testing for Jesus to prepare Him for stiffer tests ahead.*

It was precisely when He was at his weakest and most vulnerable that Satan tries out a few choice temptations on Him. The same is true for us. When we are often at our most vulnerable He will try and entice us away from the path which leads to life. He knows our 'Achilles heel' better than we do ourselves. But, with God's grace, if we survive the attack like Jesus did, we'll be all the stronger and wiser next time round.

We voluntarily do penance during Lent in order to build up our resistance to sin. The Church talks about 'the concupiscence of the flesh'. It's part of the residue of original sin which we've all inherited from the sin of Adam. It goes with our fallen nature. Basically our fallen nature finds forbidden things attractive. We hear a lot these days about the 'me too' movement. The concupiscence of the flesh is at the core of it.

But it doesn't just apply to Hollywood stars – we're all tainted with it, young and old. I think teachers of PSHE in secondary schools need to be especially aware of this and perish the thought that education on its own on sensitive matters will keep temptation at bay for the young. In fact it may even have the opposite effect and inflame concupiscence even more. The following is a quote from the catholic catechism: "*Man has a wounded nature inclined towards evil. A denial of this fact can only lead to serious errors in education, politics, social action and morals (CCC 407)*".

Traditionally the church has taught that there are three triggers for temptation, the world, the flesh and the Devil.

The Evil One is behind all temptation but the raw material is worldly status, pride in possessions and the pleasures of the flesh. There is nothing wrong with the world or the flesh per se but because of our tainted nature, indulging in worldly and carnal pursuits for their own sake can mess up our lives and play fast and loose with our eternal destiny.

Because we're living in a rather self-indulgent age the satisfaction of bodily appetites could take over our lives. Perhaps the present pandemic has put the brakes on this somewhat. When couples side-step the sacrament of marriage, for instance, are they not leaving themselves more open to temptation which St Paul says is the opposite of what the Holy Spirit wants. Jesus and his mother Mary were invited to the marriage at Cana. As we know things went a bit haywire at the wedding reception but Jesus came to the couples rescue at the behest of his mother. When sidestepping the sacrament of marriage, couples thereby leave Him and his mother out of the equation and when problems arise, as they invariably do, who or what else will they turn to.

*Temptation is here to stay but Easter proclaims that Jesus has achieved the victory over the powers of darkness the origin of all our woes. By resisting temptation with his help we draw on that victory.*