

## The Homily for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.*

This morning, I would like us to look at the Epistle from the SAPB p 96. It deals with the people of Israel in the wilderness, and logically ties into the Holy Gospel reading about the feeding of the 5000.

The passage is interesting because it examines why God did this to His people...after all, they had been through so much, had left the relative safety of Egypt and had travelled and suffered (and grumbled) in the Wilderness; why did God do this to them? The answer is telling. It says that God did this to: *“humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no.”*

Yes, the people of Israel left Egypt and wandered in the Wilderness and ate Manna, given by God to sustain them, but did they reach the Promised Land? That has to be the most important question. The answer is NO. They perished in the wilderness, summed up by God as a faithless generation. Having tried their hearts and proved them, they were found to be wanting - they refused to humble their hearts and paid a terrible price – death in the Wilderness.

And what about the multitude in the Gospel today, fed by Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee? Did they all believe and turn to a life of faith in Jesus Christ...after all, they had seen a great miracle, as great as anything their ancestors had seen...NO, we are told that they all forsook him, leaving Jesus to say to the Twelve: *“And you? Will you forsake me also?”*

The people refused to be humble, they hardened their hearts and crucified him who had fed them, healed them and taught them...and they, too, perished in the Wilderness of their ignorance, hard-heartedness and faithlessness.

Lent is always a fractious time, we can become irritable, restless and despondent...it is truly our time of Temptation in the Wilderness - we must be aware of that and be prepared to exercise great spiritual discipline and determination. Have we resolutely followed the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ this Lent? Have we fasted and prayed and beaten down the temptations of the world the flesh and the devil under our feet? Are we humble, before God and before our neighbour?

Remember the words from Deuteronomy - God is testing us to: *“humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no.”*

Yes, God is testing us. He is weighing our hearts, checking our discipline and our motives, too ...seeing if we are worthy to enter the Promised Land of His eternal glory...worthy even to serve Him here on earth! If you thought that anything you have ever written was a tough test, the results of this time of testing could well determine your eternal future.

Do you wish to perish in the Wilderness? Follow your own path. Do you wish to perish in the Wilderness? Ignore the commandments of the Lord. Do you wish to perish in the Wilderness? Choose arrogance over humility, anger over forgiveness, and wear a mask of holiness ; then your place in the Wilderness will be guaranteed!

We are keeping Mid-Lent Sunday today. Much time has passed, but God be praised, much time still lies ahead before we face our Saviour on the Cross of Calvary on Good Friday. By that time, we must have reached such a deeply focussed and spiritual state, attained such humility and holiness of life, that our Lord will be pleased to look upon our efforts.

Courage, my brothers and sisters, the road is long and hard, but He who is our Good Shepherd has trod it before us and has vanquished the foe! May His holy Name be praised from now unto all eternity.

*In the Name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*