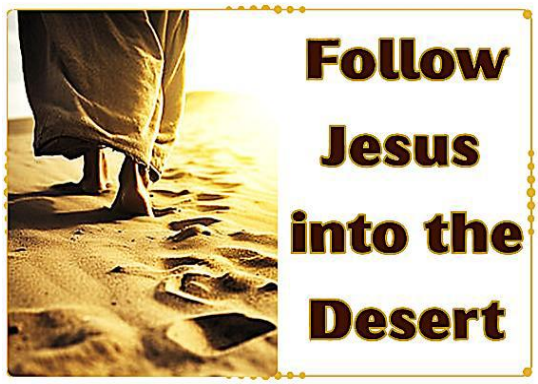

A Mini Lenten Retreat ▫ For Deacons
45 – 50 minutes

Standing at the Threshold of the Desert

Leader: Lent unfolds for the Church as a privileged time of conversion, purification, and renewed mission. For the ordained deacon, this season carries a particular grace: a call to enter more deeply into Christ's own self-gift to serve faithfully at the altar, in charity, and in the proclamation of the Word.

"**Follow Jesus into the Desert**" calls you to accept the Spirit's invitation to step back from noise, routine, and even well-intentioned busyness, in order to be reshaped interiorly. This desert is not an escape from ministry, but a place where ministry is purified, clarified, and renewed. This mini retreat invites deacons to walk with Christ into the wilderness - first personally, then pastorally - so that we may better accompany the People of God through their own deserts.

All: Lord Jesus Christ, You were led by the Spirit into the desert before You began Your public ministry. Today, we ask for that same Spirit to lead us. As deacons of Your Church, we desire not only to serve You outwardly, but to belong to You inwardly.

Strip away from us whatever dulls our hearing or divides our hearts. Teach us to hunger not for affirmation or control, but for fidelity to Your will. Grant us courage to face our weaknesses honestly, humility to receive Your mercy, and trust to rest in the Father's care.

In the silence of the desert, form us again as servants after Your own heart. Strengthen us for ministry, deepen our compassion for those we serve, and renew our joy in the Gospel. Lead us with You into the desert, so transformed by grace, we may lead others faithfully to You. Amen.

The Desert in God's Saving Plan

Reader 1: Throughout salvation history, the desert is a place of encounter, purification, and promise. Israel learned dependence on God during its forty years of wandering (cf. Deuteronomy 8:2–3). The prophets were shaped in solitude before being sent to speak God's word. The desert reveals what truly sustains the human heart.

For Jesus, the desert was not incidental- it was essential. Filled with the Holy Spirit, He withdrew into solitude to discern, to fast, and to confront temptation (cf. Luke 4:1). There, His obedience to the Father was refined, and His mission was embraced without compromise.

Reader 2: For the deacon, the desert is an interior place where vocation is purified. It is where our motives are clarified, our reliance on grace is renewed, and our service is grounded once more in love rather than obligation.

To follow Jesus into the desert as a deacon means:

- Allowing the Lord to examine the foundations of our ministry.
- Accepting simplicity so our service remains rooted in Christ, not self.
- Learning again to listen before we speak, to pray before we act.
- Trusting that God sustains His servants, even in dryness and fatigue.

The desert teaches us not only how to belong more fully to Christ, but how to walk patiently with others who feel lost, weary, or afraid.

Walking the Desert Path Together

(At your table or as a group, go through each of the 7 steps.
Note that some steps are done in meditation.)

1. Entering the Desert: Disposition of Heart

Create a prayerful space. Silence all devices. Light a candle. Place a crucifix or image of Christ before you. Keep a Catholic Bible nearby.

Invoke the Holy Spirit with this prayer:

"Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Christ in the desert, come now upon me. Lead me where I need to go, reveal what I need to see, and shape my heart for faithful service. Amen."

2. Listening to the Word in the Wilderness

Read and share:

• Slowly proclaim **Deuteronomy 8:2–5**, **Psalm 63**, or **Luke 4:1–13**.
• Which word or phrase speaks to you as a deacon?
• What does this passage reveal about trust, obedience, or dependence on God?
• How does this Word challenge or console your diaconate ministry?
• Record your reflections at the end of this retreat.

3. Naming A Deacon's Deserts

Bring before the Lord the deserts present in your life and ministry as an ordained deacon.

• Where do you experience spiritual fatigue, discouragement, or restlessness?
• Where does routine threaten to replace reverence?
• What burdens do you carry silently for your family, parish, or those you serve?

Name these honestly before God. Write them as a prayer if helpful. Offer them to the Lord, trusting that no desert is wasted when surrendered in faith.

4. Dwelling in Holy Silence

Spend five minutes in prayerful silence. This is not a time to solve problems or plan ministry, but to remain before God as His beloved deacon.

If your mind wanders, gently return to a sacred phrase such as:

"Here I am, Lord," -or- "The Lord is my portion."

Let silence become a place of rest rather than effort.

5. The Practice of Fasting for Freedom and Focus

Reflect, Pray and Share:

Fasting is a concrete expression of interior desire. Deacons fast not to prove strength, but to remember dependence on God.

• From what will you fast this Lent- food, habits, distractions, comforts?
• How will the time or space created be offered back to God?
• What spiritual hunger do you hope this fast will awaken?
• How might your fasting help you better understand the struggles of those you serve?

Allow your fasting to become intercession for your parish and those entrusted to your diaconate care.

6. Encountering Temptation with the Heart of a Deacon

Reflect, Question Yourself and Pray:

Jesus faced temptation not only as an individual, but as the obedient Son sent for others.

• Where are you tempted toward self-reliance rather than trust?
• Where do impatience, discouragement, or the desire for control emerge in your diaconate?
• How does Scripture shape your response to these temptations?

Ask for the grace to answer as Christ did- with humility, fidelity, and confidence in the Father's will.

7. Strengthened by the Desert

Conclude with prayers of gratitude and petition, trusting that the desert prepares rather than diminishes us. You may pray: "Lord Jesus, You know my weakness and my desire to serve well. Strengthen what is fragile, heal what is weary, and renew my joy in serving Your Church. May this desert bear fruit in faith, humility, and love. Amen."

Sent Forth From the Desert

Leader: The desert is never the final destination. Jesus emerged from the wilderness filled with the power of the Spirit and ready to proclaim the Kingdom. In the same way, deacons are sent forth renewed- not only for personal holiness, but for the sanctification of the People of God.

As you leave this time of prayer, carry with you what the desert has taught: how to listen more deeply, serve more humbly, and accompany others more patiently. Lead your parishioners not around their deserts, but through them- always pointing toward hope, mercy, and resurrection.

All: Lord Jesus, we thank You for meeting us in the quiet places of our hearts. As we step out of the desert, keep us grounded in what we have received. Shape our service with compassion, our preaching with truth, and our charity with joy.

Make us faithful servants of Your Word and witnesses of Your mercy. May our lives as deacons reflect the humility we learned in the desert and the hope we now carry forward. Lead us always- from desert to discipleship, from service to glory- until we rest fully in You. Amen.

Resources to Promote a Deeper Lenten Experience

- Keep a Lenten journal, noting moments of grace, challenge, and growth.
- Pray the Stations of the Cross, especially focusing on Jesus' perseverance.
- Utilize "Mary's Way of the Cross" by Richard Furey. For your stations of the cross, on one Friday, follow Jesus on his journey to Calvary through the eyes of his mother, Mary.
- Attend daily Mass or Eucharistic Adoration.
- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for a fresh start.
- Practice almsgiving: offer time, resources, or compassion to someone in need.
- Connect with a spiritual director or trusted friend for encouragement.

Lord, help us to see the Holy Season of Lent as a time of spiritual renewal,
rather than a time of deprivation. Amen.

Notes: