When I was on a pilgrimage to Israel, we visited Masada, the last stronghold of the Jews after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The temperature hit 117 degrees the day we came. We wandered around and wondered what it must have been like to hold out for a long time. When we returned to our bus, we couldn’t wait to get to the cold water that awaited us. The priest said, “The Jews were in the desert for forty years; Jesus was in the desert for forty days; you’ve been in the desert for forty minutes. Think about that.”

I have no doubt that Jesus was tempted to give himself food and water when he was enduring the desert heat. I have no doubt that in his agony he might also have thought about seizing power for himself. These are the things that tempt us when we are worn out, beaten down, or simply think we are not getting enough of what we believe we deserve.

Lent begins with the temptation of Jesus. Like us in all things but sin, he knew about being and feeling deprived and weak. And while his temptations came while he was in an actual desert, our harsh and barren places may be physical, psychological, or spiritual. We may feel lost, alone, helpless, and sometimes hopeless. In our times of weakness, evil can find a foothold and convince us that we must control our lives, that we can and should have whatever we want. In this account, we find in Jesus an example of how to resist temptation—patiently, humbly, with trust in God’s promise of salvation.

MARY KATHARINE DEELEY
sundaybulletin@liguori.org

A Word From Pope Francis

"Sin does not come from God but from our passions, from our inner weaknesses, from the wounds that original sin has left within us. That is where temptation comes from."
—Morning Meditation, February 18, 2014