



## March 6, 2022

### First Sunday in Lent

*Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days...—Luke 4:1*



Dear Friends,

A couple of weeks ago I was visiting friends in Chile. We decided to go to the south to the area they call the Region of the Lakes. A five-minute ferry ride from the mainland is a large island called Chiloe. It is made up of small farming and fishing communities. It is quite beautiful. The area is rich in communal Catholic culture. One of the practices on Chiloe is something called *minga*. What they mean by this word is everyone has the obligation to help everyone else out.

Many people there live in small wooden houses. Sometimes the houses are set on posts in the tidal zones close to their fishing boats. Occasionally someone will need to move their house to a new location. The rule of *minga* means the whole community helps. The house can be lowered into the water and floated to a new location. Then it is dragged onto logs by oxen and rolled to its new location. The owners of the house then have a fiesta for the whole community who helped. In this culture all are seen as interconnected and have responsibility towards others. Individual gifts and abilities are meant for service of others.

Recently in an interview, the superior of the Jesuits Arturo Sosa S.J. was asked, “*what is the greatest challenge facing the world today?*” He responded, “*In my opinion, the greatest challenge is that humanity has not developed a shared sense of the common good.*” One of the greatest challenges to the common good is individualism. Individualism sees everyone as a competitor and threat. Meaning is defined only by my personal wants and desires. Freedom is doing whatever I want regardless of its effect on everyone else. Individual freedom becomes an expression of selfishness rather than responsibility to the common good.

I have never understood all the caterwauling in this country about wearing masks. It is a minor inconvenience. But if it saves lives why not do it out of love? And now after two years it should be a habit that we do not even think about. It has been about protecting the whole community. The sense of *minga* in Chile was expressed in people wearing masks. I never saw anyone inside a building or out on the streets not wearing a mask. And no one complained. Honestly, I felt safer there than I did here. There is a culture where people feel responsible for each other.

In the Gospel today, Jesus filled with the Spirit goes out into the desert. This happens after Luke recounted the genealogy of Jesus. His lineage is traced back to Adam who is also called a “son of God.” While Jesus’ struggle to understand his vocation as “Son of God” is unique in some ways to him but is also applicable to all humans.

In the desert the tempter urges Jesus to selfish individualism. The challenge to change stone into bread focuses on self-preservation. It was not just a question of hunger. It was asking what kind of life would Jesus choose—a life of privilege and comfort? Or would he risk personal security to serve others and rely on the community of Faith? Prioritizing his personal needs and desires would undermine his mission. Later he would send his disciples out on mission without anything but reliance on the power of the Gospel.

The next thing the devil offers Jesus is the kingdoms of the earth. To gain these Jesus would have to accept the methods of the powerful—fear and coercion. But if Jesus was not going to live for himself alone, he was not going to seek power over others. The only power Jesus wields is the persuasive force of love. The last temptation the devil tries to camouflage falsehoods in the language of religious faithfulness. Like those who pedal the gospel of financial success promising wealth and success but forgetting the call of Jesus to share in his suffering and cross. Jesus chooses to accept truth and reality. Whatever happens must be God’s will not his.

This Lent we face the same struggles as did Jesus. Can we set aside ease and comfort and take on inconvenience and discomfort for the sake of love? Can we learn to let go of privilege to rely solely on the power of God? Can we stop reshaping our religious faith to suit our personal preferences, rather than convert our hearts and minds to the will of God? This Lent may the Spirit of Jesus help us resist the temptation to be self-serving and rise to the collective good of the people of God

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*