

**Readings:** *Deuteronomy 26: 4 – 10; Psalm 90 (91): 1,2,9 – 15; Romans 10: 8 – 13; Luke 4:1 – 13.*

For most of the year the second reading at Sunday mass runs on a separate cycle and has no necessary connection with the Old Testament and Gospel Readings; but in Lent there is a common theme each week for all three readings – today's theme is 'Faith'.

The Old Testament Readings on the five Sundays are a 'potted history' of Israel and its relationship with God, and they provide a background to the proclamation of the Gospel in the New Testament.

Today's Reading tells us of the declaration of faith which each Israelite must recite when making the annual offering of first fruits. The worshipper recites God's care of his people from the time of Jacob (who is the *wandering Aramaean*) up to the present moment. We might compare it to our recital of the Creed at Sunday mass, before we join in offering the Holy Sacrifice which has replaced the Old Testament offerings.

In the New Testament Reading from his letter to the Romans Saint Paul writes a brief summary of the faith of a Christian – *If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.* That is the heart of our faith – the absolute minimum to which we are committed by our baptism into Christ. And – as Paul writes – it is through this faith, believed and confessed, that we are *made righteous and saved.*

In the Gospel Reading – as always on the first Sunday of Lent – we hear of what is usually called 'The Temptation of Christ'. But here, as in the Lord's Prayer, 'testing' would be a better translation of the Greek word. What the devil is testing in these forty days is Jesus's faith – his faith in God his Father and in his own vocation as the Son. And the evangelists tell us that this was part of the divine plan – because it was the Spirit which led Jesus through the wilderness. Luke – like Matthew – gives us three aspects of this testing. They echo the testing of Israel on its forty-year journey through the wilderness. But, unlike the Israelites who not only failed the test of living as the children of God but actually put God to the test, Jesus remains faithful to his vocation as God's Son. The devil has *exhausted all these ways of testing him* and leaves; but he will be back. The struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil is not yet over