

*First Sunday
of Lent*



Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pause
and call to mind
God's presence
within and among
us, today and always.

Brief pause.

**All: Lord of all newness,
be with us as we set out on our
Lenten pilgrimage.**

**Awaken the depths of our being
to your presence within us –
fountain of life and love.**

**Attune the ears of our heart to
the sound of your gentle voice –
challenging, yet reassuring.**

**Enlighten the eyes of our mind
to see the path you lay before us –
untrodden, yet paved with your
grace.**

**Walk with us into newness of life
in your Son and our brother, Jesus
Christ. Amen.**

Responsorial Psalm:

25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9



**R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth
to those who keep your covenant.**

Lord, make me know your ways.

Lord, teach me your paths.

Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour. **R.**

*"The time has come
and the kingdom of
God is close at hand."
(Mark 1:15)*

Remember your
mercy, Lord,
and the love you
have shown from of
old.

In your love
remember me,
because of your
goodness, O Lord. **R.**

The Lord is good and
upright.

He shows the path to those who stray,
he guides the humble in the right path;
he teaches his way to the poor. **R.**

GOSPEL: MARK 1:12-15



The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

Pause for silent reflection.

SR MOYA'S GOSPEL REFLECTION



After As we set out on our Lenten pilgrimage we are confronted by the reality of Jesus being tempted or tested in the desert. Although each Lent begins with this event in the life of Jesus, Mark's

account differs in small but significant details from those of Matthew and Luke.

Jesus has just emerged from the waters of the Jordan where he has been baptised by John. Immediately following his baptism, the heavens are torn open, the Spirit descends upon him and a voice from heaven proclaims him as Son, the Beloved of the Father, the one in whom the Father delights. (Mk. 1:9-11) It is this same Spirit, Mark tells us, that drives Jesus into the wilderness. There is an urgency and compulsion about the Spirit's action and a seeming contradiction with the comforting Spirit that descended upon Jesus at his baptism. What does this mean? Is it highlighting that Jesus, Son of the Father as he is, has assumed our humanity so completely that the reassurance of his divinity cannot diminish in any way the struggle of the human condition that he has taken upon himself in becoming like us in all things except sin? (see Heb. 4:15)

Mark does not speak of any specific temptations faced by Jesus: he says simply that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Scripture scholars point out that the Greek word, *peirazein*, may be translated as either tempt or test, however, in the context of Mark's account it is more accurately rendered as test, the testing of Jesus. Is this again Jesus identifying with our human situation that tests us daily in various ways? Jesus, although tested, remains consistently attuned to the Father's will. Despite being in a dark and painful place, he does not lose sight of his Father's love for him.

Immediately following this testing, Jesus responding to the Spirit, goes forth to

proclaim his message: "The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News". Brief though it is, this message is the essence of the Good News: God is working powerfully to bring about God's kingdom. Australian Scripture scholar, Francis Moloney SDB, points out that "kingdom" should not be understood as "a place where God rules" but a new situation in the lives of men and women who are unconditionally open to God in the person and teaching of Jesus. This openness demands a twofold response, that of repentance and of belief.

Repentance or *metanoia* is a concept with which we are familiar and it is the call of Lent. We are challenged to look again, reconsider our life and the way in which it does - or does not - give witness to the teaching and values of Jesus and so proclaim the Good News. Michael Fallon MSC, another Australian Scripture scholar, suggests that the key to grasping the full impact of Jesus' initial proclamation is to reverse it: Believe the Good News and repent! The Good News is that the words of the Father addressed to Jesus are true also of each of us: You are my son, my daughter, my beloved. I delight in you! The more deeply we are able to grasp this truth, the more we will be open to God's grace given bountifully, and empowering us to live as Jesus lived.

Jesus' conviction that he was the Beloved of the Father sustained him through the darkness and struggle of his testing in the desert. Lent invites us, in the company of Jesus, to venture into "desert" times, times of prayer in which we ponder God's

word and allow it to form our minds and hearts and call us to repentance. The more we open ourselves to God's transforming grace, the more we will be on earth the Heart of Christ, and the more the Reign of God will become more visible in our broken world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. As you prayerfully read or listen to the Gospel and the Gospel reflection, what strikes you most forcefully?
2. How do you think the fruit of your reflection will help you in the coming week with its ups and downs?

Sr Hilda & Fr Michael's Spiritual Direction



Sr Hilda Scott: Jesus' first disciples experienced this rest and wondered what Jesus' secret was. What was it that attracted them to him? The more they got to know him the more they came to realise that at the heart of Jesus' experience was his conviction that God loved him with a special intimacy, and unconditionally. It is likely that Mark's is the first gospel and that

it is especially Peter's experience that lies behind it. I find it helpful to imagine that it was Peter who chose to quote from Isaiah in the description of Jesus' baptism: 'You are my Son. I love you. I delight in you.'

This is the good news (the 'gospel') and it was in the desert that Jesus came to realise that what he experienced is true for us all. He saw that if we realised how loved we are by God our lives would change, our priorities would shift, we would find healing and peace. This conviction is at the heart of Jesus' ministry. His vocation from God (a vocation we are all called to share) is to so love people that they would, indeed, find rest for their souls. This peace would not exempt them from the trials of life, but it would sustain them through them, as it would sustain him, even on Calvary.

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GUIDED MEDITATION WITH SR HILDA



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CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Let us pause and look into the eyes of Jesus. Let us hear him say: 'Come to me all you that labour and are over-burdened, and I will give you rest. Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.'

Pause.

Together let us pray:

Jesus, your love gave you no choice but to live your life here where we are. The gravity of our being draws us to grace.

But the desert journey tempts us to dig for wells where there is no water, to plant oases that cannot stand against the sand.

We cannot rest, for God's Spirit drives us on as it drove you.

Only your light can dispel the darkness.

Only your love can warm us
against the cold desert night.

You wanted to live here with
us, like us, for us.

Only so could you carry
us when we fall weary and
disheartened.

Only so could you give us the
heart to fight our doubts and
journey on.

Only so could you teach us
to surrender to the love that
attracts us.

Many an angel came to comfort
you in your time of need. It is
so also for us.

Our longings are infinite, our
capacity without measure.

Sing to us your song of love and
at journey's end, when desert
gives way to the pastures of
God, be there with us still in
God's embrace.