

## 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.'

## A REFLECTION BY POPE ST JOHN PAUL II

*9 March 2003*

1. Last Wednesday, with the rite of the imposition of ashes, we entered Lent, a penitential journey of preparation for Easter, an occasion for all the baptized to renew the spirit of faith and to reinforce their commitment of evangelical consistency.

As today's Gospel suggests (Mk 1,12-15), during the 40 days of Lent, believers are called to follow Christ in the "desert" to confront and with him defeat the spirit of evil. This is an interior struggle, on which the concrete direction of life depends. In fact, it is from the human heart that evil designs and actions arise

(cf. Mk 7,21). For this reason, it is only by purifying the conscience that the path to justice and peace can be prepared on the personal and social level.

2. In the present international context, there is a much stronger need to purify the conscience and convert the heart to true peace. In this regard, how much more eloquent is the image of Christ who exposes and overcomes the lies of Satan with the force of truth contained in the Word of God. In the inner heart of every person the voice of God and the insidious voice of the Evil One can be heard. The latter seeks to deceive the human person, seducing him with the prospect of false goods, to lead him away from the real good that consists precisely in fulfilling the divine will. But humble and confident prayer, reinforced by fasting, allows one to overcome even the harshest trials, and instils the necessary courage to combat evil with good. Thus Lent becomes a profitable time of spiritual training.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary so that she may direct all of us to go forward with generosity on this demanding Lenten journey.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



**Head:** Why might purifying the conscience be necessary for the path to justice and peace, both personally and socially?



**Heart:** How do you feel about the idea that we are called to confront and, with Jesus, defeat the spirit of evil within us? Have you ever experienced the battle within between the voice of God and the Evil One? How might we overcome it?



**Hands:** How might we make Lent a "profitable time of spiritual training"?

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.