

A DOSE OF GOD TODAY

Eucharist | Prayers | Readings | Reflections



THE SEASON OF LENT

The Gospel evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke mentioned Jesus' experience of temptation when he spent 40 days in the desert. Mark has the shortest account, just in two sentences [Mk. 1: 12-13]! Today's Gospel [Mk. 1: 12-15] has actually two episodes: 1) the temptation story; and b) a "summary statement" regarding Jesus' preaching in Galilee. I will only focus on the first episode: the temptation story!

In Mark's version there are three important words to remember: 1) the desert [wilderness]; 2) the wild beasts [animals]; and 3) the angels.

For the Jews, the word "desert/wilderness" has many associations. Moses spent 40 days of fasting in the desert for the sinfulness of the people that Yahweh asked him to bring to the Promised Land [Dt. 9:18]. Elijah made a 40-day journey through the desert of Horeb, after which, he was renewed, re-invigorated and re-energized for his mission to Israel [1 Kgs. 19:8]. The Hebrew people, after leaving Egypt, spent 40 years travelling through the desert, on their way to the Promised Land. During that journey, many times, Israel's fidelity to the Lord was

put to the test! Jesus, in today's Gospel, spent 40 days in the desert, the battleground between him and Satan! The "desert" then, can be a place of liberation or failure; or a place of joy and a deepening of one's commitment!

Both the "wild beasts" and the "angels" were with Jesus in the desert! Jesus had to struggle with the "wild beasts" but in that struggle, the "angels served him" [Mk. 1:3]. The angels' caring for Jesus reveals God's presence with Jesus in the desert!

The "wild beasts" represent the threatening and harmful presence of the evil forces, while the "angels" represent the gentle and protective presence of God and the forces of the Good!

The idea of "angels" underwent a development in the understanding of the Jews. In Genesis 3: 24, "angels" were portrayed as "prison guards" employed by God at the gate of paradise so that our first parents who were driven out would not be able to enter again! In the Book of Exodus [23:20ff] Yahweh sent an angel to the Israelites to guide, protect and lead them in their journey through the desert. God gave us the Angels to be our mentors and companions in our journey in life. In the Catholic tradition we celebrate the feast of our Guardian Angels [October 2]!

What do the "desert", the "wild beasts" and the "angels" signify in our lives? The world outside, and our "inner world" are the battleground of the forces of evil and Satan on the one side; and the forces of goodness and of the Kingdom of God on the other. That battleground is our "desert" We stand between these two opposing forces competing for our attention, our choice; and our loyalty!

The presence of evil and of good, are both *outside* and *inside* of us! Carl Jung, a famous psychologist wrote that some time in our life we have to face and to wrestle with our own inner “*demons*” or “*monsters*” or “*wild beasts*”. Of course Carl Jung used these terms figuratively! Jesus too had to wrestle with his own “*demons*” or “*monsters*”. When one succeeds in that wrestling, the “*demons*” or “*monsters*” are tamed and actually become our “*slaves*” or “*servants*”. Jesus succeeded in *taming* those “*wild beasts*” outside and inside of him. Jesus *defeated* Satan in the desert!

The “*wild beasts*” within us can take the form of bitterness, cynicism, depression, hopelessness, mediocrity or compromise with the Evil One!

The invitation [*temptation*] of the Evil One can be enticing and tricky! Often Satan does not appear to us like the scary, repulsive, or ugly creature often depicted in horror movies. Satan can disguise himself as “*an angel of light*” [2 Cor. 11: 14]. These “*wild beasts*” can appear in sheep’s clothing to entice us to accept their harmful and fatal proposals again subtly presented as good, and gratifying! They promise instant and quick happiness and satisfaction! An example of these is the prohibited drugs! Accepting these offers in the long run will prove to be harmful, detrimental, fatal; and dehumanizing for us! We end up the real losers!

The “*angels*” are also present, ministering to us, as they did to Jesus in the desert. The power of the Kingdom of God is both within [Lk. 17:21] and outside us! The Holy Spirit had been poured within us at our baptism.

In your life, who or which force has a stronger influence or greater hold on you: the forces of the *wild beasts*; or the caring and protective power of God’s angels? Which of these forces do you usually listen to and follow?

Fr. Manoling Thomas, CSSR

INTRODUCTION

Today, on this First Sunday of Lent, the readings remind us of Jesus’ journey while in the desert. This Season of Lent invites us also to take our own Lenten Journey, individually and as a Church.

Let us welcome God’s Spirit to lead us in this journey and bring us closer into the renewing and transforming grace of God.

Today, we also remember in our prayers all those who have been forced by different circumstances to migrate and leave their homeland and family especially the millions of overseas contract workers, as we celebrate today the National Migrants’ Sunday.

Let us all stand and sing our entrance song.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days. (Cf. Ps 91 (90): 15-16)

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

PENITENTIAL ACT

The GLORIA IN EXCELSIS (Glory to God in the highest) *is not said.*

COLLECT

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Grant, Almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy lent, that

we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

A Reading from the Book of Genesis (9:8-15)

God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth."

God added: "This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings."

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

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

YOUR WAYS, O LORD, ARE LOVE AND TRUTH TO THOSE WHO KEEP YOUR COVENANT.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. **(R.)**

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD. **(R.)**

Good and upright is the LORD, thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and he teaches the humble his way. **(R.)**

SECOND READING

A Reading from the First Letter of St. Peter (1 Pt 3:18-22)

Beloved:

Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of

Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

The word of the Lord.

Verse Before the Gospel

One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. (Mt 4:4b)

GOSPEL READING

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (1:12-15)

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Homily

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Priest: Let us now ask the grace of the Holy Spirit to lead us in our journey in this Season of Lent and bring us closer into the grace and presence of our Merciful Father. Let our response be,

LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER.

1. We pray for the Church especially for Pope Francis, our Bishops, Priests and Religious that through their witnessing, the Church will be led into continual conversion of the heart. Let us pray to the Lord.
2. We pray for our Government Officials, that they may be filled with the Spirit of service and honesty, in making their office to truly respond to the needs of the people. Let us pray to the Lord.
3. We pray especially for migrant workers and those who have been forced to migrate due to war, natural calamities and other conflicts that they may find comfort and support in our

Christian Communities. Let us pray to the Lord.

4. We pray for each other, present today, that we may enter fully celebrate the Season of Lent and bring us into true repentance and renewal of life. Let us pray to the Lord.

5. We pray for all the faithful departed, that the Lord may welcome them all in heaven by granting forgiveness of their sins and eternal peace. Let us pray to the Lord.

P: Loving Father, strengthen our faith and trust in your providence that as we journey in this Season of Lent, may we always find comfort and peace in your abiding presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Give us the right dispositions, o lord, we pray, to make these offerings, for with them we celebrate the beginning of this venerable and sacred time.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Preface: The Temptation of the Lord.

V. The lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

V. Lift up your hearts.

R. We lift them up to the Lord.

V. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

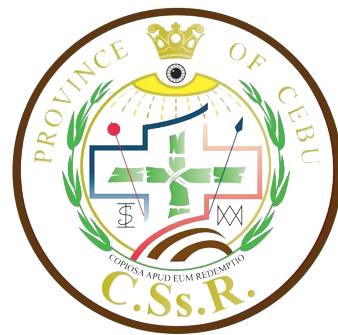
R. It is right and just.

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

By abstaining forty long days from earthly food, he consecrated through his fast the pattern of our lenten observance and, by overturning all the snares of the ancient serpent, taught us to cast out the leaven of malice, so that, celebrating worthily the Paschal mystery, we might pass over at last to the eternal paschal feast.

And so, with the company of angels and saints, we sing the hymn of your praise, as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .



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COMMUNION ANTIPHON

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. (Mt 4: 4)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. (*pause*)

Renewed now with heavenly bread, by which faith is nourished, hope increased, and charity strengthened, we pray, O Lord, that we may learn to hunger for Christ, the true and living Bread, and strive to live by every word which proceeds from your mouth.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

Bow down for the blessing.

May bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray, come down upon your people, that hope may grow in tribulation, virtue be strengthened in temptation, and eternal redemption be assured.
Through Christ our Lord.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

R. Amen.

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.