



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE B

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The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. Mark 1:12

Lent is a time for fasting, prayer and alms giving, in other words, a time to reflect and act on our particular gifts as we pour out in pure oblation our time, vocation-oriented talents, and sharing of our material resources. Mother Church, in her wisdom, gives us, over the next five weeks, a defined shape for Lent and a well-marked map to journey with Jesus along our Pilgrims Way of the Cross. *“Take nothing for your journey: no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic.” Luke 9:3* These forty days are crafted to help us set aside our worldly burden, to strive to be unfettered and alive, lighten our load, and be free in the Spirit. Our daily antiphon when we arise, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105*

As our Lenten Journey takes shape, Mother Church gives us this map:

On Ash Wednesday we are called to recommit our sacramental commission and *“Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping, and mourning. Rend your heart not your garments and return to the Lord, your God.” Joel 2:12* Indeed, we are called to be *“Ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. On behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinth 5:20.* We can only accomplish this through prayer to the Holy Spirit, and cooperate in discernment to His urgings. *“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” John 3:8.* Indeed, we must be very light of mortal burdens.

This First Sunday of Lent we follow the Spirit out into the desert. With Christ as our companion, we stand fearlessly against the “wild beasts” of our fear-driven imagination, and let our “angel,” God’s messenger, minister to us. How is our “angel” manifested at any given moment? Perhaps it is through a spiritual illumination or a random act of kindness from a stranger, or family and friends in pure compassion. With fortitude, we get a glimpse that *“This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand.” Mark 1:14.* In Lectio Divina this week, we are called to *“repent and believe in the gospel.”*

For the Second Sunday of Lent, we will follow Jesus up the mountain, where He is transfigured in Mark 9:2-10. Then, for the next three Sundays, we hear from the Gospel of John:

The Third Sunday from John 2:13-25, we see Jesus as he confronts the moneychangers in the temple, our call to cast our mortal trappings to the wind. With Jesus, we make a whip out of a *“cord of three strands, [the Trinity – Kyrie Eleison”* and drive evil temptation out of our heart and soul. *Kyrie Eleison – Lord, unbind me from the grasp of the Evil One and bind me to you. “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:12*

The Fourth Sunday, we meditate on the famous passage from John 3:16. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”*

And for the Fifth Sunday, the week before the Passion of the Lord, the poetic verses, from John 12:20-33 *“Unless a grain of Wheat shall fall upon the earth and die, it remains but a single grain with no life.”*

This week, *seek ye first the Kingdom of God.* And pray that God in His mercy grant that we may grow in understanding and wisdom of the riches hidden in Christ, as we pursue interior illumination, even in the face of the mortal trials and tribulations of our desert experience.

“Your ways, O Lord, are spirit and Truth to those who keep your covenant.” Psalm 25

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark

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

