

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

February 20, 1994

Genesis 9:8-15

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

1 Peter 3:18-22

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good 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 made subject to him.

Mark 1:12-15

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After his baptism, Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. Has the Spirit ever driven you to a particular action? How did you respond?
2. The season of Lent has its foundations in and draws its meaning from the preparation for and celebration of Baptism. Spend part of this lenten season revisiting your own Baptism. In what concrete and observable ways have you been faithful to your Baptismal Promises?
3. Who in your parish is preparing for Baptism at this time? How will you welcome and support them in their journey to the waters of the font?

Tom & Paula Kaempffer ☐

Jesus waged war with Satan

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



for the first time. It's very sparse. Mark doesn't recount what the temptations were as Matthew and Luke do. He doesn't even tell us that Jesus fasted. He only says that Jesus went into the wilderness because the Spirit drove him there, and that he spent the time with Satan, wild beasts, and angels.

SOME DETAILS are important here. "The Spirit drove him out." Yes, this is the Holy Spirit, forcibly hurling Jesus into the wilderness. Jesus doesn't just happen to be in the desert; he's there on purpose. Nor has he gone to the wilderness to get away from it all. He has gone to wage war with Satan.

Disappointingly, Mark does not tell us the outcome of the temptations. Maybe he thinks we should know Jesus wins. Maybe he explains the victory as the exorcisms unfold in the chapters ahead. Maybe the victory won't be announced till Calvary. But the battle between Jesus and the underworld extends throughout the gospel.

What are the wild beasts doing there? We're not sure. Oh, they could just be part of the landscape, but Mark's details usually have more meaning. Perhaps the wild beasts are cohorts of Satan. Perhaps since they are wild they signify the chaos which resulted after the fall of Adam and Eve, which now needs to be reconciled. Perhaps their inability to disturb Jesus signifies the ultimate victory of Christ over all creation.

Remember, Mark's main question throughout his Gospel is, "Who is Jesus?" His description of the temptation tells us that Jesus is the one who engages in cosmic battle. Up from the waters of his worst enemy. It's like baseball's preseason -- we find our enemies and launch right into conflict, though the real battles will come later.

The rest of this passage sounds a lot like one we heard a month ago. That's because it is the same. After the temptations, Jesus preaches the core of his message: Repent and believe. This command will guide us through Lent and the rest of the year.

LENT IS OUR WILDERNESS. We go into Lent not just to get away from things, not just to give things up, but to meet the devil in conflict. What are the sins and temptations that keep us from Christ? How can this Lent prepare us to fight them off?

How does your parish fail in its response to the Gospel? To what renewal is Christ calling you?

What spiritual conflict becomes an issue in our civil society? How can you help fight the battle in at least one small way this Lent?

If you feel like Lent snuck up on you, it may be that the Spirit has hurled you into the wilderness. You're not there by accident. You're there to fight.

Father Paul Turner is pastor at St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City. ☐

Daily Scripture Readings



**Sixth Sunday
In Ordinary Time**
Sunday, February 13
Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46
Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 11
1 Corinthians 10:31 - 11:1
Mark 1:40-45

Monday, February 14
James 1:1-11
Psalms 119:67-68, 71-72,
75-76
Mark 8:11-13

Tuesday, February 15
James 1:12-18
Psalms 94:12-15, 18-19
Mark 8:14-21

**Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, February 16**
Joel 2:12-18
Psalms 51:3-6, 12-14, 17
2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, February 17
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Psalms 1:1-4, 6
Luke 9:22-25

Friday, February 18
Isaiah 58:1-9a
Psalms 51:3-6, 18-19
Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday, February 19
Isaiah 58:9-14
Psalms 86:1-6
Luke 5:27-32

**First Sunday of Lent
Sunday, February 20**
Genesis 9:8-15
Psalms 25:4-9
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:12-15