



## LENT WEEK 1

Mark 1:12-15

### GOSPEL READING:

*“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.’”*

### REFLECTION:

Each year the gospel reading for the first Sunday of Lent is about Jesus’ testing in the desert. Mark’s emphasis is distinctly different from that of Matthew and Luke. No details of the testing, but rather Jesus’ sojourn in the desert is rather almost a return to the peace of the Garden of Eden. The desert of Judaea, between Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, is a noble and dignified solitude of smooth, sandstone hills. Nothing grows, of course, but wild camels and the occasional leopard prowl around. There Jesus was ‘with the wild animals’ as, led by the Spirit, he made his preparation for his mission. In what way was he tested? We may presume that in solitude and prayer he was working out the implications of the Voice from Heaven at his Baptism. How was he to run his course as the beloved Servant of the Lord? Precisely how was he to bring the presence Kingship of God into people’s lives? The ‘forty’ is often used in biblical accounts for a period of preparation, as Israel’s forty years in the desert, or the apostles’ forty days of preparation between Easter and Ascension. We may use our forty days to reflect how we may bring God’s presence to bear in and through our lives. (Commentary from Universalis app)

### QUESTIONS:

- *For understanding* – Though Mark provides few details of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, what is the importance of some of the details he does provide, such as the presence of wild beasts, the leading into the desert by the Spirit, and the length of time spent there?
- *For application* – Both John the Baptist and Jesus follow practices of self-discipline for religious reasons. What self-disciplinary practices do you use for religious (not health or other personal) reasons? How have they influenced your own "change of heart" (repentance)?



## ADDITIONAL STUDY:

**1:12-13** Jesus faces the same ordeal that Adam and Israel endured in the OT (CCC 538-540). He is tempted by Satan among the wild beasts, as the first Adam was tempted amid the beasts in paradise. He likewise retraces the steps of Israel, being led into the wilderness by the Spirit and tested for forty days as the Israelites marched in the desert for 40 years of testing. In the end, Jesus succeeds where Adam and Israel failed by resisting the devil and proving his filial love for the Father. This initiates an extended campaign against demons, death, and disease throughout the Gospel (1:25, 31, 34; 2:11; 3:5; 5:13, 39-41).

*Morally* (St. John Chrysostom, Hom. in Matt. 13): Jesus endured temptation to train his disciples how to overcome the devil. No one should be surprised, then, that after our own Baptism the tempter assails us more aggressively than before. Victory is assured if, like Jesus, we commit ourselves to fasting, wait upon the Lord with patience, and have no desire for things beyond our need.

**1:14** John was arrested: A pivotal event turning the focus of Jesus' ministry to Galilee. Prior to this, Jesus had an earlier ministry in Judea that overlapped with John's (Jn 3:23).

**1:15** *the kingdom of God*: God's sovereign rule over all nations through Jesus. The kingdom of Christ is closely linked with the ancient kingdom of Israel that flourished under David and Solomon. Although David's empire soon collapsed, for a brief time it foreshadowed the glory of Christ's reign over the tribes of Israel (2 Sam 5:1-5; Mt 19:28) and other Gentile nations (1 Kings 4:20-21; Mt 28:18-20). The international kingdom of old is now resurrected and transfigured in the Church, where Christ rules as David's rightful heir (Mt 1:1; Lk 1:32-33) enthroned in heaven (Mk 16:19; Heb 8:1-2).