

Sojourn in the Wilderness

Notes & suggestions for a Quiet Day or Morning at home in Lent 2020



The Wilderness as a place of testing

Please read Matthew 4:1-11 or 4:1-13 - Jesus is tested in the wilderness
Read it slowly, at least twice. Underline or write down the words that are the most important for you, the ones that speak to you the most. **Reflect** on the passage and your words.

Both Gospels describe the way in which Jesus is driven into the wilderness by the Spirit: the same Spirit which descended at his baptism to assure of his identity as God's beloved Son also compels him into the wilderness. Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit to face temptation and to experience temptation as part of being human.

*In the painting: **Driven by the Spirit into the Wilderness by Stanley Spencer (1943)** Jesus is striding into the frame with fearless determination; his feet firmly placed, his weight pushing forward; his arms outstretched; his hands firmly grasping the branches. There's power and energy in this image. It is in complete contrast to the way in which we might imagine Christ entered the wilderness ie. reluctantly or with some trepidation.*

The three temptations Jesus experiences are the ones we renounce at baptism: the world, the flesh and the Devil. Satan tempted Jesus with hedonism, egotism, and materialism. Temptations can be considered as distractions that deceive us by moving us away from God. Although sometimes this can be overt often it is very subtle and designed to play on our human feelings, thoughts and hopes.

Click the link to view the painting: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-driven-by-the-spirit>

For Reflection:

-Reflect on the Spencer painting. Look closely at the image and then spend some time in silence.

Stones into Bread



After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Comment: *Satisfy your hunger: no, says Jesus, for we are sustained not by bread alone. No, I will not love the world simply by satisfying physical desires for food or colluding with greed.*

For Reflection:

- Think about what truly sustains you in your life.
- Spend some time looking at the image of stones and bread – what comes to mind?

The Wilderness as a Place of Silence and Solitude

"After Jesus had left that place he passed along the sea of Galilee and he went up the mountain where he sat down." Matthew 15:29

Anthony the Great, said, "In the same way that fish will die if they remain out of water, monks who linger outside their cells or socialize too much diminish the force of their inner peace."

Comment:

The wilderness and the desert can be a place of profound spiritual growth: a place where we are drawn by God to get to know ourselves. God is always with us even if it may not really seem that way at the time. When we look back it is often easier to see that God was clearly at work in our lives and the experience served to deepen our relationship with Him. In the desert, Jesus commits himself to loving the world. In history many people have entered the desert, often to be alone and devote themselves to loving God, the Desert Fathers & Mothers perhaps being the best example of that. In Celtic Britain & Ireland saints & monks like St Columba and St Cuthbert actively sought out wild and remote places like Holy Island (Lindisfarne) in which to live and serve God.

For Reflection:

Close your eyes and bring to mind a time in your life when it felt like you were in a type of wilderness or desert. Invite Jesus to sit beside you in the remembered place and perhaps have a conversation with Him.

- Write a poem, psalm or a piece of prose about a personal experience of silence and solitude.
- Spend some time looking at the photo of the desert on page 1. Reflect on what comes to mind.

Beryl Maw March 2020