



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Jesus tempted by Satan in the wilderness

St Mark 1. 9-15

Sunday 18 February

St Mark's gospel is the oldest, and the shortest of all the gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry on earth. So it is not surprising that he describes the inauguration of Jesus' ministry in just a few sentences, beginning with Jesus' baptism, after which Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.

It was while that he was in the desert, fasting and praying, that Satan appeared and tried to tempt him. In other gospels, these temptations are spelled out in quite some detail; both what Satan said and how Jesus replied and acted. Not so in St Mark. All he tells us of this period of temptation was that 'angels waited on him' [Jesus]. It was after his period in the wilderness that Jesus went head-long into proclaiming that the kingdom of God has come and exhorting people to believe the good news.

- Why was Jesus' being led into the desert immediately after his baptism?
- What was he doing there?
- Do you ever feel the need to go off and be alone – and why?
- When we are at a low ebb, tired, hungry, are deepest fears rise to the surface – have you experienced that?
- How do you confront those fears?

Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of that ministry we associate with him. Baptism was a 'watershed' for him, in the same way that the Flood was a watershed in human history, the parting of the Red Sea for the Jews, perhaps even your own baptism if you hadn't considered it. Having been baptised, having immersed himself in prayer with his Father who openly acknowledged Jesus as his son at the baptism, Jesus got on with 'business'.

This 'business' was not primarily performing miracles with people or nature, teaching or the like, but proclaiming that the 'kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news.' All the actions that Jesus performed in the course of his public ministry, beginning now in Galilee and ending in Jerusalem, was to proclaim the kingdom was near, and encouraging people to believe.

- Why did Jesus proclaim the kingdom?
- What does the 'kingdom' mean to you?
- Who should be proclaim the kingdom today?
- How do you proclaim the kingdom?
- Is 'repentance' necessary – why?

As we begin Lent, we are confronted with the example of Jesus. His baptism was a 'turning point'. He was claimed by God as his beloved. After which he began his public ministry, following a period of prayer and reflection, during which he confronted his demons. We are 're-born', become new beings as God's adopted children, and today, however long it is since we were baptised, we are challenged at this beginning of Lent, like Christ, to enter into a new and loving, trusting relationship with God, so that we might call people to repentance, turning their backs on their old way of life, so that they may realise the kingdom of God has come, and that Christ is the way to a new, renewed life.

Lent is the prime opportunity – not the only time that we can do so, through the traditional aspects of prayer, fasting (giving things up) and charitable giving.