

# Living the Word

MEDITATING ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

1st Sunday of Lent Year A

A resource for personal, family  
and community prayer.

**“Jesus was led by the Spirit  
out into the wilderness  
to be tempted by the devil.”**



## *Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11*

'Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, <sup>3</sup>and the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.” <sup>4</sup> But he replied, “Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” <sup>5</sup>The devil then took him to the Holy City and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. “If you are the Son of God”, he said, “throw yourself down; for Scripture says: He will put you in his angels’ charge and they will support you on their hands in case you strike your foot against a stone.”

*You are invited to read the  
Gospel passage attentively,  
respectfully and reverently  
as a gift of God.*



<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.”

<sup>8</sup>Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. <sup>9</sup>“I will give you all these,” he said, “if you fall at my feet and worship me.” <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus replied, “Be off, Satan! For Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God and serve him alone.” <sup>11</sup> The devil left him and angels appeared and looked after him.

## Reading

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This passage comes after the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan where he had a profound experience of the Father's love for him. Jesus is now in the "wilderness". For the Jewish people the wilderness has a huge historical significance: following their escape from Egypt they journeyed in wilderness for 40 years. During this period of time they were formed and shaped as the people of God in preparation for entering the Promised Land. 'Wilderness', therefore, was a place where the Jewish people felt lost: no roads, no water, no food, no shelter – a time of great vulnerability, uncertainty, anxiety and distress. A time when their faith in God was severely tested.

The basic temptation of the 'devil', 'tempter' or 'Satan' is to try to persuade Jesus to stop trusting in God and to put his trust elsewhere: in material comforts, possessions, power, prestige and status. In spite of a terrible and painful struggle, Jesus' trust in the Father remains intact, and eventually the Devil leaves him, and the angels come and look after him.

## Recognising

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You are invited to meditate on the passage, or any part of it, by letting it speak to your life experience until you feel to say "I recognise this passage."

v1. "Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the

devil."

Can you recognize "wilderness" experiences in your own life (or in the life of someone close to you), when you felt lost, frightened, abandoned, and you were strongly tempted to lose faith in God? It may have been the death of someone close to you, an experience of rejection, depression or failure, shame or regret about the past, an encounter with human poverty, pain or suffering, but, looking back now, you realise it was a moment of growth and you have emerged from it a stronger person.

v9. "I (The devil) will give you all these..."

(The kingdoms of the world and their splendor) Remember a time when you were caught up in the pursuit of material possessions: power, status, pleasures, etc. in your search for meaning in life. You were tempted to pursue these at any price: lying, cheating, dishonesty - you lost your true self for a while. Remember the person or event that helped you to find your security in God once more and in his way.

v3. "Turn the stones into bread"

Can you identify with the temptation to numb the pain of loss or poor self-image or loneliness or fear by taking refuge in over-eating, under-eating, excess with alcohol, drugs, or any other solace? Remember the struggle to stay and face the pain. What was it that strengthened you in your struggle and helped you to resist?

## v7. “to put God to the test”

Can you remember an experience of trying to manipulate God in prayer or looking to God for some “spectacular sign” as a guarantee of his presence and love? Perhaps you can remember journeying to a much deeper kind of prayer – one of deep trust - just leaving yourself in God’s hands.

## v11. “Angels appeared and looked after him.”

Can you remember the painful struggle to keep faith in God’s love, even in God’s existence, in your own time of wilderness? Can you remember the angels (friend, spouse, family, community) who appeared and looked after you and helped you through it?  
or Can you remember a time when your presence, care and support made a real positive difference to someone going through a time of “wilderness”?

## *Responding*

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Having recognised God’s presence in life, you are invited to **respond** in your own words, in prayer (thanksgiving, repentance and petition).

Father, I want to thank you for the times in my life where I have experienced “wilderness.” Looking back now I can see how I have grown and I am a better person because of it – more trusting in you and in your love. Thank you, too, for the “angels” who have

looked after me during these difficult times. I am sorry for the times when I seriously doubted you and your love, and looked elsewhere for meaning and purpose in life. I found it so hard to say, “Be off, Satan.” Help me to recognize those who are experiencing “wilderness” at this time and to draw close to them in a spirit of humility and understanding. By my care and compassion let me reassure them of your presence and your love- your “angels looking after them.”

## *Resting*

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You are invited to enter deep prayer by simply **resting** your heart in God’s presence (Contemplative moment). The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage might help you on this journey into greater silence and stillness, e.g. “**Led by the Spirit**”.

## *Reflecting*

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From your journey with this passage, you are now invited to **reflect**, and put into your own words, any new insights or understanding that you have received (Wisdom moment).

From your journey with this passage, what new insight has been given to you into the meaning of temptation, Satan, endurance, commitment, deep trust and faith? **Wilderness has the potential to destroy or deepen the human spirit.**



# Children

## *Reading*

Jesus faces three temptations in the wilderness. Jesus is tempted to be relevant by turning stone to bread when he is hungry. Jesus is tempted to be spectacular by throwing himself from the Temple when he is vulnerable. Jesus is tempted to be powerful by controlling all the kingdoms of the world when he is weak. Jesus resists each temptation by claiming that God alone satisfies hunger, God alone is worthy of complete trust, and God alone is worthy of worship. After Jesus resists the temptations, he is looked after by angels.

## *Recognising*

Can you remember meeting a person who trusted completely in God despite their challenges in life?

Can you remember an experience of wilderness in your life, a tough time in your life, when an 'angel' in the form of a parent, friend or teacher came and looked after you?

## *Responding*

Father, I thank you for the ability to resist

the temptation to be relevant, spectacular and powerful, so that I can put all my trust in you.

Father, I am sorry for the times that I gave in to the temptation and worshipped other things and people rather than trusting you completely.

Father, I ask that I may become an 'angel' in the lives of my family and friends by supporting them at their toughest moments and enabling them to trust you.

## *Resting*

Rest in the supportive embrace of the Father by repeating "WORSHIP THE LORD" for as long as it is possible. May you be filled with trust as you are drawn deeper into the satisfying presence of the Father.

## *Reflecting*

Trust in the plan that will bring you life when faced with temptation of the easy way out.

**Lenten Lectio Series** - Lectio Booklet-Journeying with the Gospels of Lent- Year A (Now available). Meditate on the Way- Living the Word Podcast accompanies the series (Available on all podcast platforms). Further resources: [lectio.newrydominican.com](http://lectio.newrydominican.com)

A simple summary of Lectio steps can be found in the porch of the church.