



## First Sunday of Lent

February 18, 2018

### GOSPEL MARK 1: 12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.

He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:

"This is the time of fulfillment.  
The kingdom of God is at hand.  
Repent, and believe in the gospel."



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## GOSPEL MARK 1: 12-15

In today's Gospel we read that

*"The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert..."*

The Spirit drives us too. Every year, the Church brings us to this holy season of Lent. This time to examine our motives for our actions, our lack of love in our relationships, where we have excused our bad behavior, and where we have forgotten our neighbor. It's not easy to look so carefully at ourselves. It's even harder to repair damage done. So we are in the desert. And the good news is that the Spirit is with us. Just as the Spirit drove Jesus into the desert, so too the Holy Spirit is with us in our Lenten desert.

**Pray together and ask the Holy Spirit to accompany you now.**

*"...and he (Jesus) remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan."*

Make no mistake about it, this time is about spiritual warfare. Jesus and Satan were not having a jolly ole time in the desert reminiscing of days gone by. No, this was Satan's clear opportunity to derail Jesus' mission; to discourage him from fulfilling his Father's plan; to lure Jesus into the easy life of pride, vanity and sensuality.

"In the spirit of Lenten sacrifice, I am asked to consider the one thing I am going to give up, turn over to the Lord ...something I really ought to give up because I'm too attached to it, or because it stands in the way of my spiritual growth. This one is a real challenge, because it involves something I am very attached to...a bad habit, a possession...or something that has to do with my eating or drinking...or smoking or other addiction that I know is eating away at my health, physical or spiritual health. Or it might be a grudge I've been carrying for a long time. Or I may have to give up my pride and apologize to someone. It may be a relationship that needs to be dealt with. It may be games on my computer that eat up too much of my time....." **What do you need to give up?**

(taken from What to Give Up, *The Little Black Book Six Minute Reflections on the Gospel of Mark*)

As Jesus was in battle with Satan, so too for us, this is a time of battle. We too will be tempted by Satan, maybe now in Lent more than before, to forego our spiritual resolutions, to forego the Lenten fast and abstinence; to live an easier, distracted and superficial spirituality. Don't give in to those temptations. Stay plugged in to the Holy Spirit and Jesus's presence—who is with you. **How can you stay plugged into God's grace this Lent? Share ways that have helped you in the past or what you have resolved to do for this Lent.**



Turn over to Jesus your temptations, your spiritual battles. He is there in the desert with you. He is battling the very temptations you have and he is winning all the graces and strength for you. Continue on the Lenten desert road. He is with you through your desert.

*"Repent and believe in the Gospel."*

This is the phrase that will help conquer every temptation: Repent and believe. This "repent and believe" is our banner cry this Lent. Repent. Believe. Trust. He will not fail you.