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LENTEN
PROGRAM
Year B

Includes a
holy week
reflection from
Joan Chittister



Living in Harmony



Chittister • Creevey • Hamilton
Moore • Rowse • Snoddy



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



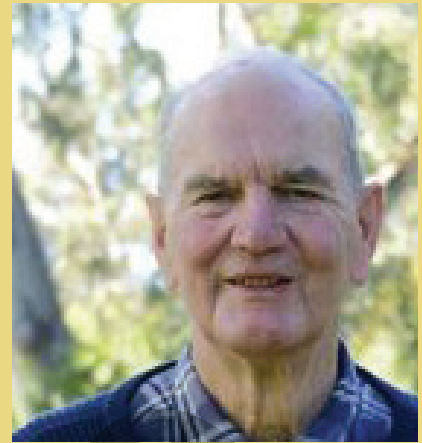
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First Sunday of Lent

**Jesus' story reminds us that
God is with us in all the hard places
and questioning of our lives.
We can remember and treasure
the times and places
of God's presence.**

≈ ANDY HAMILTON ≈



First Sunday of Lent

MARK 1:1-15

... And at once the Spirit drove him into the desert and he remained there for forty days, and was put to the test by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels looked after him. After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the gospel from God saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.'

First Sunday of Lent

The beginning of Lent coincides with the beginning of St Mark's Gospel. Both the Gospel and Lent take us on a journey in which Jesus is at the centre. We follow him through his time of teaching to his death on Good Friday and his rising on Easter Sunday from the dead. These weeks give us space to reflect on the journey of our own lives and the places where we have drifted far from Jesus' path. They also invite us to return to Jesus who remains close to us.

Mark's Gospel takes us into this dramatic and earth-changing story of God's love for us at a rush. It began with John the Baptist's mission of baptising and preaching repentance. Jesus came to hear John and was baptised as his disciple. The Spirit came down on Jesus and he alone heard God's voice revealing him to be God's beloved Son.

In today's Gospel, Mark shows God pushing Jesus into his mission. No time is to be lost. The Spirit drives God immediately into the desert. In Mark's world, the desert was a frightening place on the edge of civilisation occupied by demons and wild beasts. Like the monks later in Christian history, Jesus goes into the desert to be tested in preparation for his life's work. The testing is to see how serious he is in his acceptance of his mission. He has already heard of John the Baptist's arrest. Now he must face the doubts and anxieties, the longing for an easy life, that Satan will put in his mind through hunger, exposure, and the presence of demons. But Jesus is not alone. God

remains with Jesus through the companionship of angels.

Mark's mention of John the Baptist's arrest reminds us of the dangers facing Jesus. He then hurries Jesus into the beginning of his mission in Galilee. This is his own country, the place where he would gather people to follow him, and the place where he would meet his disciples after his rising.

Jesus' message is simple and life-changing. The time of waiting for God to act is over. God's coming is near. The challenge for his hearers is to pay attention, to believe this great news, and to respond to it.

The opening to Mark's Gospel also speaks to our celebration of Lent. It stresses the importance of our encounter with Jesus. Lent invites us to give this our full attention and to ask ourselves what matters most deeply to us. It takes us out of our daily lives where we take things for granted into the deeper reality of being pitched between life and death, hope, and disappointment.

Jesus' story reminds us that God is with us in all the hard places and questioning of our lives. We can remember and treasure the times and places of God's presence. We shall have our own Galilee whose beauty and relationships keep us close to God. Lent leads us to find new life in the old stories both of Jesus and of our own lives.

First Sunday of Lent

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have there been questions and invitations in your own life that you have pushed to the back of your mind? Does Jesus now invite you to take them seriously?
2. What events and situations in your life have made you ask yourself what matters most to you? Were these desert times as they were for Jesus? Did you feel the company of God in them?
3. Which places, people, stories and relationships mark out your country as Galilee marked out Jesus' country? How does God speak to you and call you through them?
4. Jesus called people to turn their lives around and open their hearts to the Good News of God's coming to us. What things in your faith in Jesus make it Good News for you? What in your life do you need to turn around in order to follow Jesus joyfully?
5. Jesus came to save the world. How can you help to shape our world to be what God wants for it?

PRAYER

Lent asks us to slow us down and rethink and renew our relationship with God, a relationship which can become lost or fractured by other demands in our lives. If we are serious about living a life in tune with the Trinity, we need to deliberately take the time to honour the original story of infinite love, forgiveness, salvation and the miracle of the Resurrection.

Ann Rennie

