

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

When he calls on me, I will answer him;
I will deliver him and give him glory,
I will grant him length of days.

COLLECT

Grant, almighty God,
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,
that we may grow in understanding
of the riches hidden in Christ
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Genesis 9:8-15

A reading from the book of Genesis.

God spoke to Noah and his sons, "See,
I establish my Covenant with you, and
with your descendants after you; also with
every living creature to be found with you,
birds, cattle and every wild beast with
you: everything that came out of the ark,
everything that lives on the earth. I establish
my Covenant with you: no thing of flesh shall
be swept away again by the waters of the
flood. There shall be no flood to destroy the
earth again."

God said, "Here is the sign of the Covenant
I make between myself and you and every
living creature with you for all generations:
I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a
sign of the Covenant between me and the
earth. When I gather the clouds over the
earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I
will recall the Covenant between myself and
you and every living creature of every kind.
And so the waters shall never again become
a flood to destroy all things of flesh."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 24

Response:

**Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love
for those who keep your covenant.**

1. Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach
me: for you are God my saviour. **(R.)**
2. Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.
In your love remember me,
because of your goodness, O Lord. **(R.)**
3. The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who stray,
he guides the humble in the right path;
he teaches his way to the poor. **(R.)**

SECOND READING

1 Peter 3:18-22

A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

Christ himself, innocent though he was, died
once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to
God. In the body he was put to death, in the
spirit he was raised to life, and, in the spirit,
he went to preach to the spirits in prison.
Now it was long ago, when Noah was still
building that ark which saved only a small
group of eight people "by water," and when
God was still waiting patiently, that these

spirits refused to believe. That water is a
type of the baptism which saves you now,
and which is not the washing off of physical
dirt but a pledge made to God from a good
conscience, through the resurrection of
Jesus Christ, who has entered heaven and is
at God's right hand, now that he has made
the angels and Dominations and Powers his
subjects.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

**Man does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes from the
mouth of God.**

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:12-15

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness
and he remained there for forty days, and
was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild
beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went
into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good
News from God. "The time has come" he
said "and the kingdom of God is close at
hand. Repent, and believe the Good News."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Give us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray,
to make these offerings,
for with them we celebrate the beginning
of this venerable and sacred time.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes forth from the
mouth of God.**

INTO THE WILDERNESS



Jesus has just been baptised. The voice from heaven has proclaimed: *You are my beloved son; in you I am well pleased. But how does Jesus understand this? What does it mean to be the Son of God?*

Mark tells us that Jesus was put to the test, but does not give us any details about how this might have happened. It is worth noting that this event was no accident: it is *the Spirit* who is responsible for this experience and who *drives Jesus out* to face it. It is God who is putting Jesus to the test.

In a way, this is also the experience of the disciples of Jesus. They have already taken his message to heart: they have changed their attitudes (repented) and accepted the Good News. They have publicly declared this inner change by being baptised, and through this ritual have been adopted as God's beloved children. But this will not spare them being tested or undergoing trials, any more than it did Jesus. Mark often links the Gospel with the person of Jesus: Jesus embodies the message. His experience of the power of God in suffering and rejection through to the resurrection is the way presented to the disciple, then and now. The desert or wilderness may well be the place where the person is tested and fails, as in the story of Israel on the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, but it also the place where the damaged relationship can be restored: it represents also a time of special closeness and intimacy between the Lord and the people of Israel. ■

REFLECT

The Gospels do not simply tell the story of Jesus: they mirror also the experience of the community from which they emerge. An important theme in the First Gospel, the gospel of Mark, is that of *discipleship*, what it means to be a follower of Jesus. In our reading today, which sets the scene for our liturgical season of Lent, we are told that baptism may be the end of the initial period of conversion, but it is also the beginning of a lifetime commitment, and that the newly-baptised person should expect to be put to the test in one way or another. In the Gospel tradition, Jesus has to face up to what it means to be the Son of God, and the struggle will be repeated at Gethsemane when the final test, the Passion, is about to begin.

At the beginning of Lent, we are invited to take up some practice of penance. For many of us, this is the firing-gun for a marathon ordeal, at the end of which we will feel pleased with ourselves for keeping our resolutions or a failure for not having done so. But that is not the point. The purpose of fasting is to heighten our spiritual awareness: the less the body has to do, the more the mind or spirit can function. This can be a rather uncomfortable experience: we are brought face to face with ourselves and what we are really like. But the purpose of Lent is to bring us closer to God, so that we may become more *his beloved children*. Then Easter will truly be a time of rebirth, a real cause for celebration. ■

LEARN

The term the *temptations of Jesus* is better understood as Jesus being tested.

The mention of *wilderness and forty* is meant to remind us of Israel in the desert: Israel was put to the test and failed.

Wild beasts are associated in the bible with evil powers.

Angels also minister to Elijah in the wilderness at Mount Horeb (Sinai).

DO

Choose something to do for Lent which will help to remind you daily of God's love for you: How you can better return that love in your personal relationship with the Lord?

SAY

The time has come: the kingdom of heaven is at hand.