



First Sunday of Lent

The Holy Spirit Leads us in the Way of Discipleship

Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Amid our own wilderness, allow the Holy Spirit to comfort and reveal Jesus to us, so that as one community of the Church in Broken Bay, we may be strengthened, sustained and encouraged in our call to be witnesses to build up the Body of Christ.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction



“For the Christian, to live life in the Spirit is both an invitation and a command. The invitation is to be open to receiving the Word of God. The command is to allow the Word to come to birth in our every thought, word, and action. I urge and encourage you to pursue the Spirit in prayer and to look to the wonder of Christ whose dying and rising washes away our sins and restores us to new life.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

We begin our Lenten Series with a focus on the Holy Spirit, the person of the Trinity that animates and renews. It is the Spirit that reveals Jesus to us, and it is with the Spirit’s help that we are led forward, encouraged and guided in our path of holiness and mission both personally and communally. It was the Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness, as we read in today’s Gospel, for a time of discernment, testing and strengthening. We pray for an openness to the Spirit’s promptings and that the Holy Spirit will lead and empower each of us in the Diocese of Broken Bay as we seek to animate Bishop Anthony’s priorities in our lives and in our communities, and in doing so, continue Jesus’ mission of sharing His Good News that has been entrusted to us.

Gospel Reading



Audio: Week 1 Gospel Reading



Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested; Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

Reflection

– Sr Josefa Mabini OSA

Pastoral Associate
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour
Parish, Toukley/Lake Munmorah



During this Season of Lent, the Church once again invites us to a wilderness experience. Like Jesus in the Gospel reading, we are invited to journey to a place where wild beasts and temptations abound. It is a journey to test one's steadfastness and faith in God. The Lenten journey into the wilderness calls for a movement away from our comfort zones and into the unknown. It is a journey away from the false security offered by material goods and human wisdom and strength and to appreciate God's gift of the Holy Spirit — our only true good and source of security.

Before Jesus' journey to the wilderness where the Spirit drove Him, Jesus was baptised in the Jordan by John the Baptist. During that event, the Spirit descended upon Jesus and a voice was heard from heaven saying, “You are my beloved

Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mk 1:11). This was the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry – His mission had commenced. The mission was not going to be an easy one. It would be fraught with discouragement, betrayal, opposition, and threats to his life. Such was the fate that awaited God's beloved Son. The journey towards the Kingdom of God, a journey towards fullness of life, is filled with obstacles and crossroads. It is never easy. Hence, before embarking on the arduous task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness where He stayed for forty days with Satan tempting him.

Although Mark does not provide us with a detailed account of the temptation, we are able to know more about this in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (cf. Mt. 4:1-11 and Lk 4:1-13). Jesus prayed. He fasted in the wilderness. He was surrounded by wild beasts. Amid the difficult conditions, Satan tried everything in his power to dissuade Jesus from fulfilling his mission and prevent him from obeying the Father's will. Yet, Jesus did not budge! Propelled by His love for the Father, He endured the hunger, the loneliness, and the danger in the wilderness and was steadfast in fulfilling only one thing – to do the Father's will, not His (cf. Mk 14:36). And He triumphed! The angels sustained Him and looked after Him.

Today, we who are followers of Jesus are invited to remain steadfast in our faith. Temptations and trials are a

reality in life, more so for those who follow the path of discipleship and holiness. Yet, Jesus promised us that we will never be alone in this journey. God gives us the Holy Spirit to strengthen, sustain, and encourage us. The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with love that enables us to endure all trials (Rom 5:3-5). For only with love are we able to pray, fast, and give alms as Christ commanded us. These are the three pillars of our Lenten observance. And doing these will only have meaning if we have love – the kind of love which only the Holy Spirit can give.

In his pastoral message to the Diocese, Bishop Anthony reminds us that “it is the Holy Spirit who animates and sanctifies the community of the Church. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the gift of faith, and it is the same Spirit who equips the saints for mission, for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ.” Truly, when we are animated by the Holy Spirit’s gifts, no obstacles – no temptations – can dissuade us from becoming true disciples of Christ.

Reflection Questions for Discussion:



1. **Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**
2. **How do you understand the action of the Holy Spirit in**

leading you on your path towards discipleship?

3. **In which areas of your life is the Holy Spirit inviting you to grow?**
4. **What temptations do you foresee blocking your journey towards spiritual growth?**

A Personal Story



Audio:
Week 1 Personal Story – Natalie



Natalie offers us a personal reflection on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in her life.

Natalie is part of the Lindfield-Killara and Corpus Christi St Ives parishes. She has started her first year working as a primary school teacher. Last year she completed the Alpha course and has felt the Holy Spirit more present in her life. She is excited to experience and learn more about the Holy Spirit and all of His wonders.

Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss:



1. **What aspects of the Holy Spirit’s action in Natalie’s life spoke to you most deeply?**

