

Into the Wild

Intro. As if we haven't already been sort of wandering in a desert the past year, now it's Lent. What else is there to give up? Haven't we sacrificed enough? While many of those things like take-out meals, movies on the small screen; no face to face card games or holiday family gatherings could certainly qualify as sacrifice, not much of it was truly spiritual. Not being able to go to Mass, confession, receive Communion or see each other at church are spiritual sacrifices we *have* made. We are looking for the sign that tells us that control of our lives is being returned to us, but it is still a few months away. A recent and more important sign are the ashes we received on Wednesday marking the start of Lent. Today's gospel contains a sign for another people also waiting for a new beginning.

I. The Spirit appearing to the Lord at the Jordan River signaled it was time for him to leave home and

family. Mark is very economical with his words; he gets a lot out of a little. He tells us the Spirit *drove* the Lord into the desert. It's a powerful image. When the Spirit comes over someone, energy is created and has a purpose. In one word Mark expresses the *power* of the Spirit *on* and *in* the Lord, leading him to the desert to prepare for his three year mission. He was *guided* by the Spirit the whole time he was in the desert. That what it means, "angels ministered to him." The Lord would be tested by being alone, the lack of regular meals and the constant presence of evil around him. We know from our own experiences just how real evil and temptation can be.

So off we go, *not* into the wild, blue yonder, but into the "desert" for these days. This is our annual opportunity to review our lives to see how we follow the Lord, and to strengthen our resistance to evil.

Since there are no true deserts close to us, we have to find some quiet places to be alone. Due to the pandemic, we already have a few. For the next few weeks, we could take those same places and make them into places for prayer and spiritual growth.

Concl. Some suggestions for Lent from our recent bible study found places right here on church property. They include walking in the quiet of the columbarium, visiting the Mary Garden next to the activities center. Others are our own backyards or the many parks around us like Doctors' Lake or Camp Chowenwaw's trails along Black Creek. The beach isn't too far away. We could even create a new area in a corner of the house away from most distractions. One of the suggestions most difficult is to *put down our digital and visual devices for extended periods of each day.* Basically make a space to hear the Lord and change habits. Read scripture, pray more, fast and give time as well

money to local food pantries and soup kitchens. **For forty days the Lord was tested as he focused on his mission. During these forty days if we aren't tested, we probably aren't working hard enough against the evil in our lives and our world.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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