

1st Sunday of Lent (B)

The lectionary of Mass Readings is on a 3-year cycle. Each year features one of the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark or Luke. They are very similar in many respects and tell a lot of the same stories of Jesus's life. And each year, the first Sunday of Lent tells us the story of the Temptation of Jesus in the Desert, just as He is starting His ministry.

Matthew and Luke both go into fairly in depth detail about Satan's interaction with Jesus and the quoting of the Old Testament by each of them, and what the Temptations explicitly are. You probably remember hearing some of them over the last several years.

And today, we're given Mark's version of the Events. The whole sentence. "The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan."

That's IT!

No quoting scripture, no turning stones into bread, no high place with a vision of the whole world, no parapet of the temple. Nothing.... But, "He remained in the desert for 40 days, tempted by Satan.

That's not a lot to work with, but let's look. What have we got?

Well, He was there 40 days. What does that have to do with anything? Well, if we look at the actual flood in Genesis, we see that "All the fountains of the great abyss burst forth, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. For forty days and forty nights heavy rain poured down on the earth." There's a connection.

And St. Peter's letter tells us that Noah's flood was a prefigurement of Baptism, and it was the occasion of God's first covenant with Man, and the sign of that covenant was a bow in the clouds.

And what the Gospel read today doesn't tell us is that When the Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert was immediately after HIS BAPTISM in the Jordan by John, where the heavens

were torn open and the Spirit, like a dove descended upon him and a voice from the clouds said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

So... maybe it was Baptism, and the descent of the Holy Spirit which gave Jesus the strength to endure those 40 days of temptation, and to then go on proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and calling for them and US to repent and believe in the Gospel.

Calling them to Baptism.

And all of this is very appropriate for the first Sunday of Lent, because today we celebrate the Rite of Election of Catechumens, as they prepare for their Baptism at the Easter Vigil, when we will also renew our Baptismal promises, and celebrate the New and everlasting Covenant with Christ. These Arm us to resist temptation for the rest of our lives.

We will celebrate that Rite at the 10:00 Liturgy. We ask you to pray for our Catechumens, Chris and Tanner, as they prepare to be strengthened by their Baptism, and for Lauren who will also join in the Eucharist, that they may resist the temptations of Satan, which might lead them to doubt. And that we also remain strong in our Lenten resolves of almsgiving, prayer and discipline, which draw us ever closer to Christ. Remember, Lent is a Holy Time... But it will only be Holy for us.... If WE make it Holy.

We'll deal with the parapet of the Temple and the other temptations of Christ next year.