

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

I establish my Covenant with you.

First Reading

Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love.

Psalm

Christ himself, innocent though he was, died once for sins,
died for the guilty, to lead us to God.

Second Reading

'The time has come and the kingdom of God is close at hand.
Repent, and believe the Good News.'

Gospel

Father,
through our observance of Lent,
help us to understand the meaning
of your Son's death and resurrection,
and teach us to reflect it in our lives.

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Genesis 9: 8–15; Psalm 24 (25); 1 Peter 3: 18–22; Mark 1: 12–15



The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



First Sunday of Lent
Year B
21st February 2021

God's Covenant

Lent – a new liturgical season, and an opportunity to start again. We can give thanks to God for giving us this season of grace. Lent is closely associated with God's Covenant and with baptism, and the readings this Sunday strongly underline this.

In the **First Reading** from Genesis, God makes a Covenant with Noah's people, saved from the flood by the ark. It is a Covenant of peace, symbolized by the rainbow.

St Paul, in the **Second Reading**, reminds us that just as Noah is saved from the waters, so we are saved by the waters of baptism. It is a pledge made to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The **Psalm** is a prayer that we may walk in God's ways: a suitable prayer for beginning our Lenten journey.

The account of the temptations of Christ in Mark's **Gospel** is very brief. It is only after this experience that Jesus begins his ministry, calling people to repent and believe the Good News.

This week, we may give thanks for 'this joyful season' (as the Lenten preface calls it) – a time to prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery.

Opening Prayer

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.

Second Reading 1 Peter 3: 18–22

Christ himself, innocent that 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.

I come to my place of prayer. How do I feel at this time?

Am I eager to make a fresh start this Lent, or maybe with the present situation, I feel weary, and see Lent as long and dark?

I place myself in God's presence. I try to be open to his love and his gifts, especially to the Son's self-giving love which we will celebrate in Holy Week.

I take the time to read the text a couple of times.

St Peter takes us to the kernel of our faith – that Christ died for us and was raised in the Spirit. How do I feel when I think that I am personally involved in this mystery?

God's Covenant is with **me**, sealed by my baptism. How can I renew this pact with God this Lent?

God 'waits patiently'. I speak to him of my hopes and fears, and offer him this time of preparation.

I give thanks for God's faithfulness, and I entrust all those I love into his care as we journey together towards Easter.

I draw my prayer to a close with an '*Our Father*'.

Gospel Mark 1: 12–15

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.'

As I begin my prayer, I relax my body and clear my mind so as to be fully present to my God. I put aside my concerns for this moment, breathing in God's love and goodness. I know he loves me just as I am, and I may ask for the grace to respond.

When I am ready, I take up the Gospel passage and read it slowly. I then read the first paragraph again. I imagine Jesus, immediately following his baptism by John, inspired by the Spirit as he goes out into the wilderness.

Jesus is 'driven' by the Spirit. What is this force?

He goes out into solitude, into silence. Why?

I may wish to consider the importance of the Spirit and the role of silence in my own life.

God keeps Jesus safe – the angels look after him. Yet he is tempted by Satan and surrounded by wild beasts.

As his disciple, I will not be protected from fear and temptation.

How can I remain trusting and faithful in these times?

At his baptism, the Father spoke to Jesus: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'. Can I hear these same words spoken to me too, as God's beloved child?

It is after this time of testing, of clarification, that Jesus begins his ministry. As I begin this season of Lent, I may pray to the Spirit that it be a time of revelation for me, my community, my world ...

What is my desire for this time?

I speak to the Lord, I listen to him.

I end my prayer in thanksgiving, '*Glory be ...*'