

## **21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 – FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT**

**The temptations of Christ and following Christ today.**

**Gospel: Mark 1. 9-15**

Today is the First Sunday in Lent in 2021.

In Lent, one thing we are asked to do is to reflect on how we can become better followers of Christ. We can do this by spending more time with God in Christ. This thought reminds me of these words from the hymn by William Cowper, “O for a closer walk with God”

*“O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame.*

*A light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb”*

We see something of this going on in Jesus’ earthly life in the Gospel reading when Jesus is baptised by John. Mark’s Gospel tells us that as Jesus is baptised he is told by a voice from heaven “Thou art my Son my Beloved. On Thee my favour rests”

If you wanted a saying to explain what was happening to Jesus, it could be

“Cometh the hour, cometh the man”

But just as all human beings need time with God before embarking on something new, so Jesus after his Baptism needs to work out with the person he called “the Father” what his mission in life is to be and how he is to do this. And he knows that as he does this. he will have temptations and demons to face.

But as Jesus begins his ministry, Mark’s Gospel does not tell us what these temptations or demons are. Their precise details don’t seem to be important to Mark. Perhaps he just wants to tell us that Jesus in his “time out” became fully aware of what his mission was to be and how he was to do it

We see something of this going in Mark 1.15 where Jesus’ opening words in his ministry are, “The time has come- the Kingdom of God is upon you. Repent and believe the Gospel”. And as you read Mark’s Gospel, you see that Jesus is faithful to his calling up to and including Good Friday and that he really was who he said he was.

You could say by adapting some words often used by athletes today that Jesus always “stayed focussed” on what he was being asked to do.

So how are we to “stay focussed” on our faith journeys as we journey through Lent to Easter and the same time begin the journey out of the latest Lockdown measures

Here are some thoughts and reflections from the Iona Community for you to ponder

*Jesus says “I am the Way for you”*

*And so we come to follow Christ*

*Jesus says, “I am the Truth for you”*

*And so we come to dwell in the Light*

*Jesus says “I am life for you”*

*And so we come, leaving behind all else to which we cling*

These words take us into this Worship Song

*Take O take me as I am, summon out what I shall be;*

*set your seal upon my heart and live in me*

And then these words take us into these words of St Columba of Iona (521-597) also known as St Collum-cille.

**‘What is best for the Christian life?** Simplicity and single-mindedness. A careless Christianity which resists great bother, its trial in fire will be great, its reward in heaven will be small. An active Christianity which resists great comfort, its trial in fire will be small, its reward in heaven will be great.

**What is best for the mind?** Breadth and humility, for every good thing finds room in a broad, humble mind.

**What is worst for the mind?** Narrowness and closedness, and constrictedness, for nothing good finds room in a narrow, restricted mind.

**What best serves devotion?** Simplicity and sincerity

**When is a person able to testify to the souls of others?** When he can testify to his own soul first.

**When is he capable of correcting others?** When he can correct himself first. As a lantern raises its light in a dark house, so truth rises in the midst of faith in a person's heart'

And a concluding Prayer from Iona

*Look at your hands, see the touch and tenderness*

*God's own for the world*

*Look at your feet, see the path and direction*

*God's own for world*

*Look at your heart, see the fire and the love*

*God's own for the world*

*Look at the Cross, see God's Son and our Saviour*

*God's own for the world*

*This is God's world*

*And we will serve God in it*

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