

MEDITATION 6

Mark 1: 12-13

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

"And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness"...

Jesus is baptized by John, purified with clarity as to his vocational direction, empowered by the Spirit, and confirmed by the voice from above: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." But then, what happens?

Have you ever doubted your vocation, doubted a core relationship, doubted how you were seen, heard and appreciated for all the nice words and kind sentiments?... Why and how does doubt creep into us?... We try to push it away and push it down, but it keeps rising up in us at inopportune times... Doubting ourselves... It happens to all of us...

But do we have the courage to name our doubts, to allow the questions about ourselves, about core relationships, about things we have taken for granted are solid, permanent and clear becoming shaky and uncertain in us?... Do we have the courage to allow such questioning and doubt to emerge and be named?...

Well, but there's more. It is the Spirit that takes Jesus out into the wilderness... hmm... What if we saw our doubts, questions and the shaking of our foundations as sometimes guided by the Spirit... Would we then trust the process rather than resist it or simply be terrified by it?...

None of us likes to live with doubt, or the in-between of uncertainty... But can we trust it?... Jesus is having to trust this being driven into the wilderness... It is of the Spirit and therefore it will bear good fruit in time... He finds the courage to allow the Spirit to take him where it will...

What about you?... Have you experienced good fruit coming out of times and periods of doubt, uncertainty, or self-questioning?... Are you in this wilderness now?... No doubt such wilderness times will come at some point in your life... But you are also baptized by the Holy Spirit... Trust the wilderness times... We don't choose them when they come... But the Spirit can guide us through so that we squeeze meaning and deeper direction through and beyond them...

Prayer: Come to me O Spirit of God... Fill me at this time, whether I am certain or doubting, whether I've found some answers that satisfy or am still searching in some way... Come to me, guide me, assure me...

"He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan"...

40 days is a long time... and tested by Satan means that the experience was not pleasant or kind... In fact, it was rough... It was bad... Satan's goal is to bring us down... Testing can cause us to get bitter, disillusioned, shut down...

And sometimes our times of testing and struggle in the wilderness are a long time too... Often enough they are... And we don't control when we fall into them or when we get out of them... The key here is how we see them and live in them... They are fearful and easily destructive of self and others in our relationships... but can they also be part of our potential deepening and growing?... What if we believed they were and are?... Would this make a difference in how we live them?... Instead of bitter could we get better in some ways we have not imagined?...

God is at work in you not only when you're on top of the world and feel good about yourself... God is also at work in you when you feel super vulnerable and also flawed and failed for all your efforts... Imagine that... God is at work in you... Do you believe?...

Prayer: Come to me, O Spirit of God... fill me with assurance that you are with me, in me, and flowing through me, even when I cannot see it, feel it or believe it, so deep in the pit as I can be or inevitably will be from time to time... I am vulnerable in ways you know, O God... strengthen and solidify me in grace and goodness through this journey, and through my downs as much as my ups...

"He was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him."...

Here it is... He was with the wild beasts... yes, that speaks of struggle, fighting, resisting... But the angels are also waiting on him, to embrace him, support him and empower him as he comes out... They are not intervening but waiting... This means they know he will come out and be clearer, stronger and more purified through and beyond the struggle...

Do you believe there are angels waiting for you as you rise up after your sojourn in the wilderness... tested by Satan... contending with the wild beasts... tormented at times by your own thoughts and the actions or neglect of others?... The angels are waiting for you... The Spirit is guiding you... The outcome is already assured... Do you believe?

PRAYER: Give me the kind of faith I need at this time of my life, O God... In the face of doubts that creep up... In the face of questioning, struggle and uncertainty... Give me the kind of faith, rooted in hope that there is growth to happen, greater resilience, clarity, direction, fulfillment...

It's not the perfect life I'm after, O God, but a good life... It's not about getting everything right, but about getting the right things right... It's not about being on top of the world, but

about finding meaning, purpose and joy because my soul is in harmony with you amidst tense or conflicted relationships and a vocation in life still in discernment as life keeps changing right now...

Take me where you will, O Spirit, even if it be the wilderness right now... Protect me from evils around, help me come through with the learning I need to do... Assure me that your angels await for me too even as I may content with wild beasts... In Jesus' name... Amen.