

# Daily Reflections



Sunday 18 February 2018  
(Year B)

To

Saturday 24 February 2018

## Sunday 18 February 2018

Scripture: Genesis 9: 8-15, Psalm 24, 1 Peter 3: 18-22, Mark 1: 12-15

After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, *'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'*

Lent is a penitential season – when we reflect on our weaknesses and failings and look for ways to overcome them. In today's gospel, we hear that Jesus was tempted but did not give way to it. Instead, his time of temptations seems to have given him a sense of urgency – a real desire that people should know that God's kingdom is very close. He does not go around saying things like *"down on your knees, you miserable sinners!"* Instead, he speaks of fulfilment – and faith in the good news he has come to bring.

- Why do you think Mark speaks both of wild beasts and of angels?
- What could your equivalent of the wilderness be?

Spend time today thinking about the coming few weeks – echoing Jesus' time in the desert. It was a time between his baptism and his active ministry – a kind of retreat. Think about how you might make this Lent a retreat in daily life. In your own words, make a commitment to the Lord to build prayer, fasting and almsgiving more deeply into your life and to strive to grow closer to him between now and Easter.

## Monday 19 February 2018

Scripture: Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 18; Matthew: 25:31-46

Jesus said, *'Those who are judged unrighteous will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."*

This extract from today's gospel is a reminder that a good life is not just measured by the things we *do* but also by things we do *not* do. It is sometimes easy to

they deserve it, so we too may need to stretch our love to encompass people we do not like or always agree with.

- Who are the people you struggle most to understand or accept?
- When have you been with people different from yourself and found that you do indeed have more in common than you had realised?

Spend time today thinking of the ways in which we are encouraged to love people like ourselves and hate others – through the media, for example. Bring your thoughts and concerns into a time of prayer – asking for the grace to see others as God sees them.

It is all too easy to let differences and disagreements fester on. Sometimes, people go months and years without speaking – or avoiding subjects that they know would cause arguments. Jesus is offering a fairly dramatic scenario for dealing with such things. Very few of us would be willing to leave Mass at the offertory to go and make the phone call or pop round to see the family member or friend we have offended or need to be reconciled with. But maybe he is reminding us that, even if we do not do it then, it might be something we need to think about tackling at some point soon.

- Do Jesus' words strike any chords with you today?
- Who might you need to be reconciled with – and how might you go about it?

Spend time today thinking about any issues that the Gospel has brought up for you. If it is something you can put right, ask for the grace and the courage to act on it. If it is a situation that could be dangerous or too painful at this stage, use your journal to explore it in a safe way – expressing a desire to put things right but accepting that the time might not yet be right for you.

## Saturday 24 February 2018

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Ps 118 (suggest verses 1-8 – rather than the whole of it...); Matthew 5: 43-48

Jesus said, *'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.'*

Many people in our world are more comfortable with loving their neighbour and hating their enemy. Societies are often built on such thinking but it is dangerous and has led to much conflict. Disagreements about things are highlighted – even when, in truth, people have far more in common than they have differences. Jesus reminds us that every human person is a brother or a sister since we have one Father. God does not make the distinctions that we do – even though he has more reason to. As God does not deny good things to any of his children, however little

overlook the times when we should have acted and failed to do so. It is somehow easier to admit *"I did this"* – *"I lied about that..."* rather than to acknowledge that something we did not do had as great an impact on others.

- As you read the gospel, is there something that comes to mind as something you have not done?
- How might you use this Lent to focus on the things that you might normally not do but which you now realise you should?

In a time of quiet prayer, think about some of the things Jesus highlights as things people should do but which often we do not. Do any of them strike you as speaking directly to you? Or does something else come to mind? If you are journaling, make a note of what seems to be being prompted – and then strive to act where previously you might not have done.

## Tuesday 20 February 2018

Scripture: Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 33; Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus said, *'Pray then in this way:*

*...Lead us not into temptation...'*

In a series of question and answer sessions about the Our Father, Pope Francis said this about this phrase: *"This is not a good translation. I am the one who falls, it's not (God) who pushes me toward temptation to see how I fall. A father doesn't do this, a father helps us to get up right away."* The Pope went on to say that the one who leads people into temptation *"is Satan; that is the work of Satan."* He said that the essence of that line in the prayer is like asking God: *"when Satan leads me into temptation, please, give me your hand. Give me your hand."*

Just as Jesus gave Peter his hand to help him out of the water when he began to sink, the prayer also asks God to *"give me your hand so that I don't drown."* The Catholic Church in France has decided to use the phrase *"do not let us fall into temptation"* as an alternative and Pope Francis has indicated that it or something similar should be applied worldwide.

- What insight do Pope Francis's comments offer you?

- What is the difference between “*lead us not into temptation*” and “*do not let us fall into temptation*”?

Spend some time today using “*Do not let us (or me) fall into temptation*” as a mantra – a simple repeated prayer. You might find it useful to practise for times when you find yourself confronted by something that is tempting you away from the path to God.

## Wednesday 21 February 2018 (St Peter Damian)

Scripture: Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 50; Luke 11:29-32

Jesus said, *‘The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!’*

Nineveh was a thriving and powerful city in Assyria – a country often at odds – and war – with the Jewish people who saw it a wicked place worthy of the destruction Jonah was sent to warn them of. The city repented and changed its ways but for devout Jews of his time, the thought that the people of Nineveh would stand up in judgement and condemnation of them would have provoked anger and resentment. We can imagine that it would be similar today if people in the west were told that the people in Iraq or other countries would sit in judgement on them.

- How would you feel if people from other countries judged us unfavourably?
- Would it make a difference if their criticisms were justified – or would that make it harder?

Jesus was pointing out that many of the Jews of his time were not living up to the values they claimed to uphold. Try to step outside our ‘*comfort zone*’ and ask yourself whether we live up to the values we claim to stand for. Ask the Lord’s guidance about what you might do about this – to act – to speak up – or... Pray for the grace and the courage to do as he seems to direct.

## Thursday 22 February 2018 – St Peter’s Chair

Scripture: 1 Peter 5: 1-4; Psalm 22; Matthew 16: 13-19

Simon Peter answered, *‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’* And Jesus answered him, *‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...’*

Jesus is playing on words here. He uses the Aramaic word *kepha* or *Cephas* which means rock. This is translated, in turn, into biblical Greek as *petros*. If we were thinking of a word to attach to Simon it is unlikely that we would immediately think of a rock. During Jesus’ earthly life, Peter was distinctly wobbly – and even after the resurrection, Peter did not show much in the way of leadership or stability. It took the coming of the Holy Spirit to make the great change that showed the early Church what Jesus had seen in Peter. It is a reminder that Jesus –and God – does not choose the already perfect. This is reassuring to the rest of us...

- What do you think Jesus saw in Simon?
- Do you find it reassuring that God does not wait for us to become perfect before calling us to serve him?

Pray today for Pope Francis and his ministry. Pray also for the Church as it faces many threats and attacks as it tries to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the world.

## Friday 23 February 2018 (St Polycarp)

Scripture: Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 129; Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said, *‘When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.’*