

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR B) Sunday 18 February 2024

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

STUNT PERFORMERS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Temptations in the wilderness (Mark 1: 9-15)

All three synoptic Gospels portray Jesus' ministry beginning with a period of forty days in the wilderness tempted by Satan. Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark's account does not describe the temptations experienced by Jesus. The temptations described by Matthew and Luke challenge Jesus to adopt a model of Messiahship which would win power, carry wide public appeal, and not lead to the inevitable cross on Good Friday. In one of these temptations Jesus is challenged to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple. A Messiah who could survive such activities would be guaranteed a following.

Our image to stimulate reflection on Mark's account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness is *stunt performers*.

Core extracts from the Gospel passage (Mark 1: 12-13; for reflection throughout the week)

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

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you were tempted by Satan,
but Satan did not win.
Stand with us when we are tempted,
that we too may withstand Satan's tricks;
for you are our God.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Mark 1: 9-15

The Baptism of Jesus

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

The Temptation of Jesus

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

Now 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.'

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ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Mark 1: 9-15)

Begin exploring Mark's account of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you make of the Spirit driving Jesus out into the wilderness?
- How do you understand Satan tempting Jesus?
- What do you make of Jesus being with the wild beasts?
- What do you make of angels waiting on Jesus?
- How can we best understand the narrative for today?

Using your Bible

Explore the Temptations of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. What do they add, and what do they omit?:

- Matthew 4: 1-11
- Luke 4: 1-13

Explore references to angels elsewhere in the synoptic Gospels:

- Matthew 26: 53
- Luke 22: 43

Explore references to wild beasts in the Old Testament:

- Genesis 2: 18-19
- Psalm 91: 10-13
- Isaiah 11: 5-9

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Mark's account of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Interpretations of Mark 1: 13
- Images of the Temptations of Jesus
- Stunt performers

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Mark's account of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness is *stunt performers*. Draw on your experience of stunt performers. For example:

- Your experiences of hearing about the Temptations of Jesus
- Your experiences of facing temptations
- Your experiences of stunt performers

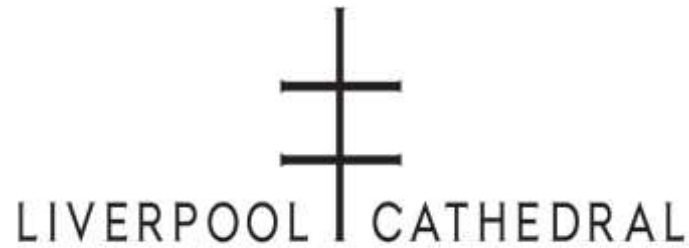
What have you learned about stunt performers?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Mark's account of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness or by the image of stunt performers.

- Make a collage of images of the Temptations of Jesus.
- Make a poster of Jesus among wild beasts and angels.
- Make a display of stunt performers.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of the temptation of Jesus or on the image of stunt performers.

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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