

**Reflection on the Gospel-1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent Year B  
(Mark 1:12-15)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Lent comes around each year and presents us with its usual challenge to take stock of our lives, to see more clearly what is in our hearts, and to discover what might be calling us out of our comfort zones. It is a time to consider how we might respond to the pain of the world and of its inhabitants. It is a time for personal as well as group reflection, a time for entering into “the wilderness” and for grappling with the mysteries of life. It is a time of preparation for Easter when we will renew our baptismal vows and celebrate the greatest mysteries of our faith.

The gospel reading invites us to reflect on Jesus’ forty-day experience in “the wilderness”. Jesus is said to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” and, like so many human beings before and since, is “led by the Spirit” into the wilderness of life to be “tested” there. [“Tested” is a more accurate translation of the original Greek term than is “tempted”]. Forty is a symbolic number in Israel’s story: the great flood lasts forty days and forty nights; Moses spends forty days and forty nights on the mountain of God; Israel wanders for forty years in the wilderness; King David reigns for forty years; the prophet Elijah travels forty days and forty nights in the wilderness on his way to the mountain of God.

The wilderness of Judah, with its unique desert flora and fauna, its wadis and waterholes, is ever so real. At the same time it functions symbolically in the narrative. In Israel’s story, it is the place of testing for God’s people: “Remember the long way that your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness... testing you to know what was in your heart” (Deuteronomy 8:2). Jesus now passes the tests that Israel failed in the wilderness.

Jesus is “with the wild beasts”. This terse statement recalls the prophet Isaiah’s vision of a future time of reconciliation and harmony when “the wolf will lie down with the lamb” (Isaiah 11:6-9). Jesus is presented as the one who ushers in that age of peace and healing of division. God’s agents care for him in his time of testing: “angels minister to him”. In this context, Jesus announces the coming of God’s empire or reign. His message is to “repent” or to “think beyond” in a way that might turn lives around in God’s direction, and to “believe the good news” that he is set to proclaim in word and action. At a time of growing divide between the mega-rich and the desperately poor, we might look back to our symbolic tradition and forward to ways of bringing good news to those mostly deeply affected by the inequities in our world.

**THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT—YEAR B**



**ST ALIPIUS PARISH, BALLARAT EAST**

Including St Peter & Paul’s, Buninyong

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**MASS TIMETABLE FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING  
MONDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY 2018**

<b>MONDAY:</b>	No Mass
<b>TUESDAY:</b>	5.00 pm in Mercy Centre
<b>WEDNESDAY:</b>	11.00 am in Mercy Centre
<b>THURSDAY:</b>	9.30 am in Parish Church
<b>FRIDAY:</b>	9.30 am In Parish Church

**NEXT WEEKEND’S MASSES**

<b>ST. ALIPIUS</b>	SAT	6.00 PM
	SUN	10.30 AM
<b>BUNINYONG</b>	SUN	9.00 AM

**The SECOND SUNDAY of LENT, YEAR B**

<b>READINGS</b>	First: Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18
	Second: Romans 8:31-34
	Gospel: Mark 9:2-10

**ANNIVERSARIES:** Jack Gittings, James Curran, Helen Dondoy, Jimmy Calistro, Mary Blood, Lucy Wolf, Mr & Mrs Harasimowicz, Bruno van Dooren.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK:** Nathan Cambell, Denise Learmonth, Cath Wheelahan, Terry McGarry, Kevin Walsh, Peter Clohesy, Frank Nolan (Buninyong), Mary Barnett, Fiona Dickinson, Carmel Doherty, Pauline Murphy, Maria Wilson, Aurora Ferrer, Patricia Harman.

**COUNTING TEAMS:**

**This Week: Team 2:** B. Perkins ©, F. Nolan, J. Lewis.

**Next Week: Team 3:** M. O'Donnell ©, L. O'Donnell

**COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:**

<b>PARISH:</b>	Envelopes:	\$ 925.50
	Loose:	\$ 300.00
	Direct Debits:	\$ 995.00
		\$ 2,220.50
<b>PRESBYTERY:</b>		\$ 691.00



**LENTEN REFLECTIONS**

On Thursdays during Lent the Parish offers an opportunity for Lenten Reflections on the Sunday Gospel. These will be held at 10.00 am in the Church meeting room.

**PRIESTS RETREAT 2018**

Many of the priests are gathering this week in Halls Gap for retreat. Please remember them in your prayers.

**PREPARATION FOR SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**

If you are seeking to have your child/children celebrating sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Eucharist and your child/children attend schools other than Catholic Parish schools, we are able to assist you. Please contact the Parish Office or your nearest Catholic school—Emmaus, St Alipius, St Francis Xavier, soon.

**RITE OF ELECTION**

Yesterday at St Patrick's Cathedral those wonderful people who are entering the Catholic Church through the RCIA and the RCIC celebrated the Rite of Election and were received by Bishop Paul to continue their journey through to Baptism at Easter. From our Parish we have seven children who are preparing for the sacrament of Baptism. Please pray for them and their parents and those who will guide and walk with them.

**SOCIAL AFTERNOON**

Wednesday, 21st February at 2.00 pm in the Mercy Centre. Please enter via Gent Street.

**40 DAYS FOR LIFE FEB 14—MAR 25**

Join the international Pray to End Abortion campaign this Lent with other pray-ers on Wellington Parade, outside Jolimont station, anytime between 7 am and 7 pm daily. Register at [www.40daysforlife.com/melbourne](http://www.40daysforlife.com/melbourne) to add your hours to the calendar or phone 0407 350 948 for more information.

**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER—FRIDAY, 2ND MARCH**

Once again, we approach the first Friday in March when Christians world wide gather to pray for the issues that affect us all. This year the service has been prepared by the Christian Women of Suriname, a tiny republic on the north east coast of South America. Translated into many languages, this interdenominational service will be used world wide, uniting us in our hopes and concerns. You are invited to join the prayer at one of our local services:

- 10.00 am Skipton St Uniting Church (525 Skipton St, Ballarat)
- 2.00 pm Neil Street Uniting Church (Macarthur St, Soldiers Hill)
- 7.00 pm Buninyong Uniting Church (Learmonth St, Buninyong)

**BISHOP PAUL'S PARISH VISITATION**

Bishop Paul will be visiting our parish as part of his Diocesan Visitation Programme from **March 2nd to 5th** which will include visits to the schools of St Alipius, St Francis Xavier, Emmaus and Damascus. He will celebrate the weekend Masses and meet and greet parishioners. More details later.

**NEW FAITH FORMATION AND SPIRITUALITY RESOURCES**

The Ballarat Diocese Faith Formation page has been updated with new resources for Lent (for groups and individuals) and many other formation and personal spirituality resources. Many are free to download at [www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/Services and Agencies/Faith Formation and Spirituality](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/ServicesandAgencies/FaithFormationandSpirituality).

**WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND**

*Invest in your most precious asset....Your Marriage!*

Forget life's tensions and interruptions and rekindle the closeness, intimacy, love and romance that brought you together. Recharge your relationship batteries and explore the precious nature of your marriage, allowing you both to share your feelings, hopes and dreams with each other in ways that normal, daily living tends to inhibit.

**2018 Melbourne weekend dates:**

16-18 March; 1-3 June; 17-19 August; and 9-11 November.

The weekend starts at 7.00 pm on Friday and ends at 5.00 pm on Sunday. Accommodation and all meals are provided.

For Information/Bookings: Phone Andre and Maria on 0411-225-992.

Email: [vicbookings@wwme.org.au](mailto:vicbookings@wwme.org.au)

Website: [www.wwme.org.au](http://www.wwme.org.au)