

## Homily 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent B 2021

Each year on the first Sunday of Lent we encounter Jesus in the wilderness. Mark leaves out the temptations because he has something important to tell us. On leaving the wilderness, Jesus announces that the kingdom of God is very close and calls us to repent and believe the Good News. Wilderness experiences can make it hard to believe God is close, let alone find any good news. Real wilderness experiences are not chosen and rarely desired; they are thrust upon us. Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit; yet, it would change his life radically. This kind of experience leads to a greater awareness of the importance of life, of family and friends. It reveals life to be a complete gift of God. Sensitivity to others and to creation is heightened and everything becomes more vivid and alive. After the wilderness, but possibly during it, the presence of God is much more evident; a presence that colours everything with an aura that radiates the divine as though everything is aglow with blessings - blessings that wait and even long to be accepted. Everything possesses a new warmth and a welcome like the smile of a baby waiting to be picked up brings a smile to your face and a swelling of love in your heart - precious, precious experiences that are sacrosanct. Lent can help us recognise how present God is, watching over us, defending us from the evils too ready to swallow up our lives. Lent is a time to recall our precious and sacrosanct moments and relive their value and importance. My father rang with the laughter of God that put everyone at ease, removed tension and reassured. My mother flowed with the care and compassion of a loving God that made it impossible not to believe. My parents (or was it God? or was it all three?), helped me through my wilderness experiences. Experiences that continue to teach me something new each day. Lent becomes a more precious time each year. It is to be lived with wonder and expectation along with all its challenges, difficulties and failures. It prepares us not just to be present with Jesus through his passion and death but to walk by his side with compassion and empathy, even though fearful and often stumbling, until we walk into the explosion of the Easter light. . . .