



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 18 February 2024

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, the first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel presents us with Jesus tempted in the desert (cf. *Mk* 1:12-15). The text says: “He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan”. During Lent, we too are invited to “enter the wilderness”, that is, silence, the inner world, listening to the heart, in touch with the truth. In the desert, today’s Gospel adds, Christ “was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him” (v. 13). *Wild beasts* and *angels* were his company. But in a symbolic sense, they are our company too. Indeed, when we enter the inner wilderness, we can encounter *wild beasts* and *angels* there.

Wild beasts. In what sense? In the spiritual life we can think of them as the disordered passions that divide the heart, trying to take possession of it. They impress us, they seem seductive, but if we are not careful, we risk being torn apart by them. We can give a name to these “beasts” of the soul: the various vices; the coveting of wealth, which imprisons us in connivance and dissatisfaction; the vanity of pleasure, which condemns us to restlessness and loneliness; and the craving for fame, which gives rise to insecurity and a continuous need for confirmation and prominence — let us not forget these things that we can encounter within — covetousness, vanity and greed. They are like “wild” beasts, and as such, they must be tamed and fought. Otherwise, they will devour our freedom. And Lent helps us enter into the inner wilderness to correct these things.

And in the desert, there were *angels*. They are God's messengers, who help us, who do us good. Indeed, according to the Gospel, their distinguishing trait is *service* (cf. v. 13): the exact opposite of *possession*, which is typical of passions. Service versus possession. Angelic spirits instead evoke the good thoughts and sentiments suggested by the Holy Spirit. While temptations tear us apart, the good divine inspirations unify us and let us enter into harmony. They quench the heart, infuse the taste of Christ, "the flavour of Heaven". And in order to grasp the inspiration of God, one must enter into silence and prayer. And Lent is the time to do this.

We can ask ourselves, first, what are the disordered passions, the "wild beasts" that stir in my heart? Second question: to permit the voice of God to speak to my heart and to preserve it in goodness, am I thinking of retreating a little into the "wilderness", am I trying to dedicate space during the day to this?

May the Holy Virgin, who kept the Word and did not let herself be touched by the temptations of the evil one, help us on our Lenten journey.

After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, 10 years have passed now since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan, which has caused a very grave humanitarian situation. I once again ask the conflicting sides to stop this war, which is so harmful to the people and to the future of the country. Let us pray that paths of peace can be found soon, in order to build the future of dear Sudan.

Violence against defenceless populations, the destruction of infrastructure, and insecurity are again rampant in the province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, where even the Catholic mission of Our Lady of Africa in Mazeze was set on fire in recent days. Let us pray for peace to return to this tormented region. And let us not forget so many other conflicts that stain the African continent and many parts of the world with blood: also Europe, Palestine, Ukraine...

Let us not forget: war is a defeat, always. Wherever there is warfare, the people are exhausted, they are tired of war, which is always pointless and inconclusive, and brings only death, only destruction, and will never lead to the solution of problems. Instead, let us pray tirelessly, because prayer is effective, and let us ask the Lord for the gift of minds and hearts that dedicate themselves to peace in a concrete way.

I greet the faithful from Rome and from different parts of Italy and the world, especially the pilgrims from the United States of America, the Neocatechumenal Communities of various parishes from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Spain, students from the "Carolina Coronado" Institute of Almendralejo and the volunteer association, "In the Footsteps of the Servants — Towards the

World". And I greet the growers and livestock farmers in the square!

This afternoon, along with collaborators of the Curia, we will begin the spiritual Exercises. I invite the communities and faithful to dedicate specific moments to gather themselves in the presence of the Lord during this Lenten time and throughout this year of preparation for the Jubilee, which is the "Year of Prayer".

I wish you all a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. *Arrivederci!*