

## I LENT– 21st February 2021

### JESUS, TEMPTED BY SATAN.... AND THE ANGELS WERE MINISTERING TO HIM.- Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

#### Mark 1, 12-15

*The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

For the first Sunday of Lent, the liturgy presents us with the passage of the temptations of Jesus in the desert in Mark's Gospel. In these temptations, Jesus does not pray, nor fast; why? The evangelist does not intend to present an episode from the life of Jesus, but the whole existence of Jesus. We know that the number forty in the Bible has a figurative value, it has no mathematical value, it represents a generation. Then the evangelist, in these few verses, points out to us what was to be Jesus' whole existence; therefore not an episode from which Jesus emerged victorious, but his whole life.

.The evangelist writes in chapter 1, verse 12 "*The Spirit immediately...*" the spirit that Jesus received at the moment of baptism, and now as a response to God's love, Jesus verses that love towards mankind, a love that leads to freedom. "*The Spirit immediately drove him...*" the verb used by the evangelist is very strong, "*he drove*", to indicate the urgency of this activity, "*..into the wilderness,..*" This wilderness recalls the desert of the Exodus, the path of liberation, that which Jesus has come to accomplish, to free his own people.

"*And he was in the wilderness forty days,..*" as I said before it does not indicate an episode of the life of Jesus, but Jesus' whole existence, "*.. being tempted by Satan.*" The verb "to tempt" in this gospel is attributed to those who believed themselves to be, in culture of that time the closest to the Lord, the Pharisees. It is they who are Jesus' temptors because they are like Satan, the devil who divides; they divide men from God, man from woman and men from each other. He is tempted by Satan and Jesus will address, as "Satan" one of his own disciples, Peter, who does not accept Jesus' indication to go and communicate life, he wants a Messiah of power and does not understand that Jesus instead will be defeated by power.

And then, the evangelist writes, that "*..he was with the wild animals..*" In the book of Daniel the wild beasts indicate empires and power, that which can bring death. So Jesus for all his life was in danger of losing his life and "*.. the angels were ministering to him.*". Angels appear for the first time in an attitude of service. These angels that we will later see are depicted by women in Mark's Gospel. The first will be Peter's mother-in-law who will serve Jesus, the last time it will appear will be the women at the crucifixion, who followed him from Galilee. While the disciples throughout the gospel quarrel among themselves to know who is the most important, who is above the others, it is the women, who were considered to be the beings furthest from God, the ones who understood that

communion with God occurs through - and the evangelist uses the verb "diakoneo" (phonetic), hence the term deacon - which means a service freely performed for love. In the tenth chapter it will be Jesus, during a discussion with his disciples, who will say that he did not come to be served, but to serve. The service freely carried out with love and generosity is the only guarantee of communion with God.

And then the evangelist immediately after states that "*..after John was arrested*". Here are the wild beasts: both John and Jesus announce an invitation to change, but those who hold the power have no intention of changing and want to persecute all those who proclaim this change.