**Reflection for the first Sunday of lent**

**Mark 1: 9 - 15**

It is interesting how the different gospel writers use the chronology of events. Over the last weeks we have been looking at the various events that affirmed Jesus as Son of God. Mark has his own version of events and as we look towards Lent it is valuable to look at what he sets down.

Jesus comes to be baptised by John in the Jordan and we are witness to the Spirit descending like a dove on him and this voice “You are my Son the beloved with you I am well pleased.” Whereas Matthew and Luke suggest that Jesus embarks immediately on his ministry. Mark tells us that after his baptism Jesus is ‘driven out’ into the wilderness. The words ‘driven out’ are, I think, important. For Jesus, who has been a part of this event at the River Jordan, he cannot but have been moved. We believe Jesus to have been fully human and as such would have been subject to human emotions. The impact of this event of the Spirit descending upon him would surely have had a profound impact on him. So, Mark’s concept of Him being driven into the wilderness is entirely credible. We have no idea quite when Jesus becomes aware of what He has been set upon this earth to do. Could this have been the time when the full realisation is laid before Him – we do not of course know. In any event Jesus goes away to reflect upon the enormity of the task in front of him. As he reflects and thinks over the task that lies ahead of him it is hardly surprising that he is tempted to take shortcuts. the temptations to do the dramatic things: jumping off temples, turning stones to bread to feed the hungry, to feed himself even, and of course the worst of all to sell his soul to the devil.

It is quite easy for us to look at these temptations dressed up with the figure of Satan complete with forked tongue and Trident in his hand, to make them remote from us, from our daily lives. This is however what we face daily. We are faced with the temptation to take the easy way out - not to do things the hard way, to dismiss ideas as dated and irrelevant. The whole purpose of Jesus’ life as a human with all the human frailties is to show that we do not always have to take the easy way out. On our journey through Lent, we explore Jesus’ passage towards the cross and ultimately to the glorious resurrection on Easter day. The great thing to remember is that as we struggle to discern what is right, what are legitimate shortcuts, and what we should avoid, we can be certain that Jesus too struggled with the same difficulties. His was not a remote life in an ivory Palace but he shared our life on earth, He shared the temptations and overcame them.

*Everlasting God,
your son Jesus Christ was tried and tempted.
May we never be ashamed of temptation
but saved from the weakness of giving in.
May our Lenten journey bring us close to you
as we discipline ourselves in study and in our daily lives,
taking new things on if we give things up,
and opening our minds to new insights along the way.
Help us to see this time of Lent as an opportunity
to develop our discipleship and discipline
and as your Son Jesus showed us how to reject temptation,
fill us with grace to be faithful to his example
in this Lenten season and the years ahead*.

**Amen**