



Pope at Angelus: Journey through Lent listening to voice of God

As Christians take our first steps on the Lenten path, Pope Francis invites us to confront our inner struggles and to allow the voice of God to speak to our hearts.

By Linda Bordoni

On the first Sunday of Lent, Pope Francis took his cue from the Gospel of Mark that presents us with Jesus tempted in the desert (Mk 1:12-15).

Speaking during the Angelus address, the Pope reflected on the symbolic significance of the wilderness, urging Christians to "enter the wilderness, that is, silence, the inner world, listening to the heart, in contact with the truth."

In the desert, he continued, Christ "was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to Him. Wild beasts and angels were His company."

But, in a symbolic sense, he explained, "they are our company too: indeed, when we enter the inner wildness, we can encounter wild beasts and angels there."

Beasts of the soul

"In the spiritual life, we can think of them [wild beasts] as the disordered passions that divide our heart, trying to take possession of it."

Warning that they "entice us; they seem seductive," the Pope said. "If we are not careful, we risk being torn apart by them."

And giving a name to these "beasts" of the soul, he described them as "the lust for wealth, which imprisons us in connivance and dissatisfaction, the vanity of pleasure, which condemns us to restlessness and solitude, and the craving for fame, which gives rise to insecurity and a continuous need for confirmation and prominence."

They are "wild" beasts, the Holy Father said, and as such, they must be tamed and fought; otherwise, they will devour our freedom.

"We need to go into the wilderness to become aware of their presence and to face them," he stated.

God's messengers

Then, focusing on the angelic presence in the desert, the Pope said angels are "God's messengers, who help us, who do us good; indeed, their characteristic, according to the Gospel, is service."

Contrasting this image with the possessive nature of disordered passions, he said they are "the exact opposite of possession, typical of the passions."

And highlighting the transformative power of divine inspirations, Pope Francis elaborated on the fact that "While temptations tear us apart, the good divine inspirations unify us in harmony: they quench the heart, infuse the taste of Christ, 'the flavour of Heaven'."

Thus, he upheld the need for silence and prayer to grasp these thoughts and feelings inspired by God, saying: "Lent is the time to do this."

Two questions

Pope Francis concluded with two crucial questions:

"What are the disordered passions, the 'wild beasts' that agitate in my heart?"

And, "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', that is, of dedicating space to consider this?"

"May the Holy Virgin," he prayed, "who kept the Word and did not let herself be touched by the temptations of the evil one, help us during this season of Lent."

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