

# TRINITY NEWS

## **A Reading from *True Wilderness* by Harry Williams**

**L**ent is supposed to be the time when we think of Jesus in the wilderness. And the wilderness belongs to us. It is always lurking somewhere as part of our experience, and there are times when it seems pretty near the whole of it. Most people's wilderness is inside them, not outside. Our wilderness is an inner isolation. It's an absence of contact. It's a sense of being alone-boringly alone, or saddeningly alone, or terrifyingly alone.

This Lent, unlike the ecclesiastical charade, this sense of being isolated and therefore unequipped, is a necessary part, or a necessary stage, of our experience as human beings. It therefore found a place in the life of the Son of Man. Because he is us, he too did time in the wilderness. And what happened to him there shows us what is happening to ourselves. Here, as always, we see in his life the meaning of our own.

Notice first that it is by the Spirit that Jesus is driven, thrown out is the actual word used by St. Mark, into the wilderness, the same Spirit which had brought him the conviction of being called to do great things. The Spirit is ourselves in the depths of what we are. It is me at the profoundest level of my being, the level at which I can no longer distinguish between what is myself and what is greater than me. So, theologically, the Spirit is called God in me. And it is from this place where God and me mingle indistinguishably that I am thrown out into the wilderness. The story of Jesus reminds us that being thrown out in this way must be an inevitable concomitant of our call to God's service. To feel isolated, to be incapable for the time being of establishing communion, is part of our training. That is because so far our communion has been shallow, mere pirouetting on the surface. We've come to see it superficiality, its unrealness. Hence the feeling of loss. The training doesn't last for ever. In fact, new powers of communion with our world are being built up within us. We are being made the sort of people of whom it can be said,

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‘All things are yours.’ But it belongs to the training to feel it will last for ever. And so, we are tempted of Satan. Tempted to give up, to despair. Tempted to cynicism. Tempted sometimes to cruelty. Tempted not to help others when we know we can, because, we think, that’s the use. Tempted to banish from our life all that we really hold most dear, and that is love, tempted to lock ourselves up, so that when we pass by people feel, ‘There goes a dead man.’ And behind each and all of these temptations is the temptation to disbelieve in what we are, the temptation to distrust ourselves, to deny that it is the Spirit himself which beareth witness with our spirit. God in us.

And this self-distrust conjures up the wild beasts. Sometimes they’re sheer terror, panic, which makes us feel about the most ordinary undangerous things, ‘I can’t do it.’ Or the wild beasts are the violent rages roaring inside us triggered off by something ridiculously insignificant - a word, a glance, a failure to show interest in some petty concern. Or the beasts prowl around snarling as envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

This then is our Lent, our going with Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. And we might apply to it some words from the First Epistle of St Peter: ‘Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice, in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.’

Christ’s glory is his full and satisfying communion with all that is. It is the opposite of being isolated. You don’t have to wait for this until you die of the world comes to an end. It can be yours now. Accept your wilderness. From the story of the Son of Man realise what your Lent really means, and then angels will minister to you as they did to him.

[Source: Celebrating The Seasons]

## **SAINTS:**

**St. Matthias, the Apostle.** In the nine days of waiting between Jesus' Ascension and the Day of Pentecost, the disciples remained together in prayer. During this time, Peter reminded them that the defection and death of Judas had left the fellowship of the Twelve with a vacancy. The Acts of the Apostles records Peter's proposal that "one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:21–22). Two men were nominated, Joseph called Barsabbas who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. After prayer, the disciples cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias, who was then enrolled with the eleven. Nothing further is told of Matthias after his selection. According to tradition he was an exemplary Apostle, but we know nothing more. Matthias seems an appropriate example to Christians of one whose faithful companionship with Jesus qualifies him to be a suitable witness to the resurrection, and whose service is unheralded and unsung.

**Polycarp.** (d. Feb. 23, 156). Bishop and martyr. He was born in the second half of the first century and became the Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor (Turkey). Polycarp is listed among the "Apostolic Fathers." Writings related to him include a letter of Polycarp to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp. The letter reveals that Polycarp is in the tradition of the Fourth Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch. The Martyrdom is a letter written by the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium, describing Polycarp's heroic martyrdom. It is the oldest "martyrdom" (account of martyrdom) that has been preserved. It contains the oldest allusion to the custom of preserving relics of martyrs. His witness is commemorated in the Episcopal calendar of the church year on Feb. 23.

### **February - March 2024:**

- February 29, Healing mass, 3:00p.m.

### **\*Ongoing registration for Confirmation, and Reception. \***

- Holy Week, March 24-30.
- Easter Sunday, March 31.