

# Online Resource - Lenten Reflections

# The Grace of Wild Places

GOD REVEALING, GOD INSPIRING, GOD CHALLENGING

*"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us."* St Francis of Assisi

## 1st Sunday of Lent

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. Lk 4: 1-13

## God Revealing.....

For humans to go into wild places, we are generally more alert that we are in the territory of animals, plants and terrain that have not been "tamed". We are there on their terms. Attitudes to wilderness have changed over time. Old Testament references describe wilderness as barren, threatening, desert landscapes. In the eighteenth century, naturalist Henry Thoreau, promoted the concept that "in wildness is the preservation of the world".

***"The beauty of nature and the wilderness has become vitally important for the spirituality of many people."*** Paul Collins

Now, scientists define a wilderness area as a large area of land that together with its native plant and animal communities is essentially unchanged by human activity.

In Australia many wild places are of spiritual and cultural importance for Aboriginal peoples. Australia's wild places are diverse, encompassing Forests, Wetlands, Deserts and Marine Areas. Australia is one of only seventeen countries recognised in the world for its high level of biodiversity much of which is unique. Wilderness areas maintain biodiversity by helping sustain symbiotic relationships.

Today's technological society causes habitat fragmentation and degradation, leading to extinction of species. Preserving larger areas of wild places supports better connected populations of species, reduces extinction risk and contributes to greater resilience.

Source: 'Wilderness and Nature Conservation' (Mackey, et al). <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/26124354?selectedversion=NBD41258576>

## God Inspiring.....

Jesus, inspired by God's spirit went into a wilderness area. He would have been aware of the ability of wild places to strip one of the usual supports of town dwellers: easy access to food, drink, shelter and human company. To be in solitude in a wild place enables one to be aware of God's presence in all the other life present there.

Jesus, open to the presence of God's grace, even though he was tempted by ideas of power and wealth, found clarity of thought about his mission in life. "As biblical scholar Francis Moloney points out, being with the wild beasts suggests that the prophetic promises of new creation are being fulfilled in Jesus." Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Natural World*.

Prayer:

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. *Pope Francis*.

***"In Aboriginal cultures, the creator spirits walked this land and called each place into being. They gifted each newly created place with a name they sang. The power of that song sang these places to life."***

*Julian Tenison Woods, Symphony of Life.*



Image source: [goo.gl/](http://goo.gl/)

***"Let us journey to a lonely land I know...the wild is calling, calling.....Let us go."***

*Robert Service, The Call of the Wild*



Image: [goo.gl/5MxtEB](http://goo.gl/5MxtEB)

## God Challenging.....

When you enter a wilderness place remember that it was there before you and will be there after you move on. It is polite to ask permission to come and learn in that place.

Wilderness areas are under threat from development and mining. The Painted Desert in South Australia with its ancient weathered rock hills of magnificent colours, sits above the Great Artesian Basin. It is home to many rare species of plants and animals, such as Australia's largest monitor lizard, the Perentie, *Varanus giganteus*. [goo.gl/Be5iha](http://goo.gl/Be5iha) Despite this, an open cut coal mine is planned. <http://www.altonaenergy.com/>

Learn about a mining project that threatens wild places in your area. If possible go there. Discuss with others how you can get involved in the protection of that wilderness area. Share what you do with others. Make time to pray and reflect on what you are doing.



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