



**Meditation for the First Sunday in Lent  
February 21, 2021**

**Theme: The Wilderness Within: Bewilderment as a Lenten Discipline**

*And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. [Mark 1:12-13]*

Lent is often described as a journey through the wilderness—through an “in between place” where the unexpected is to be expected. “Wilderness” shares the same root as “bewilderment.” Richard Rohr reminds us: *Jesus did not come to change the mind of God about humanity; Jesus came to change the mind of humanity about God. Most of us were taught that God would love us if and when we change. In fact, God loves you so that you can change. It is the inherent experience of love that becomes the engine of change.*”

These words can be our compass as we begin Lent, emboldening us to enter our own wilderness, confident that we will emerge with a stronger sense of self, a deeper trust in God, and a more vivid sense of the beauty of this world and of our place in it. We commit ourselves to a Lenten discipline not so that we will be “better persons” in 40 days, but so that we will experience more deeply the unending, unbounded and unconditional divine love that no one can take away from us.

Each of us has a wilderness within—a barren place, a place where emotions are not resolved, where hope feels like a fantasy and resentment resides, where our heart aches and our sense of purpose is fragile. Rebecca Lyman describes the “wilderness in our souls” as the place/time when *we survived and found unexpected grace. The wilderness within ultimately sets us free . . . When our expectations are shattered, we receive the unexpected. We are bewildered by grace.* ([www.journeywithjesus.net](http://www.journeywithjesus.net), February 21, 2010).

Lent is the time to go to a place where we will be *bewildered by grace*. Each of us has a wilderness just over the horizon of our everyday lives. It may be a soup kitchen, or a neglected relationship, or an abandoned source of joy, a cluttered room or a postponed delight. All of us have made assumptions about God that are getting in the way of our experience of a deep and abiding love that will make change possible. Each of us has a place in hearts where we need to relearn who we are.

Our Lenten journey begins with the conviction that we can change, that we can live without fear, and that bewilderment is a good thing. The wilderness is real and it is difficult terrain, but the only path to resurrection lies before us there.

*God of the desert, as we follow Jesus into the unknown, may we recognize the tempter when he comes; let it be your bread we eat, your world we serve and you alone we worship.* -from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*