

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



In today's readings:

After the flood. Genesis 9:8-15
Waters that save and liberate. 1 Peter 3:18-22
Jesus tempted by Satan. Mark 1:12-15

Next week:

Jesus transfigured!
Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18;
Romans 8:31-34; Mark 9:2-10

In a nutshell

The struggle in the wilderness points to the messianic disturbance Jesus' presence brings to the world. In biblical terms, the 'wilderness' represents a place of trial, the site of confrontation with evil. The ministry of Jesus heralds God's victory of peace over war, wholeness over sickness, life over death.



Drugs: the big lie

*A story of struggle with evil and strength through Christ.**

This is something new for me. I don't know where to start but my story needs to be told. If it helps just one person, I will have accomplished something. I am 35 years old, male, and presently serving a sentence in jail. This is my third and final time here. I am confident of that because of God's grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. I'm a 'born again' Catholic Christian.

I am here for one reason: Drugs, the Big Lie. I started out with alcohol, advanced to marijuana, went on to taking pills and snorting powder, and then to shooting up heroin. My supposed friends talked me into shooting up. When I got busted this time, I was doing \$500 worth of heroin and cocaine a day. From a \$3 six pack of beer to a \$500 a day heroin habit! This has resulted in me being locked up for five of the last eight years. I have stolen from my family and friends and I have lost many opportunities.

All this for drugs.

All I am trying to say is, don't let peer pressure, tragedies, exams or any other excuse lead you to drugs. They will put your life on a collision course with disaster. And if you do have a problem, don't be afraid to seek help. Most of all, ask God for help through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will be getting out of here soon, and I know I'll make it this time. I can't do it on my own, but with Jesus, I will not fail. I beg you: don't ever give the devil an opening with drugs, for he'll use you up. I speak from experience.

* Source: Abridged version of a story from *Together*, diocesan newspaper of Wagga Wagga (NSW).

Struggle in the wilderness

A friend of mine is courageously dealing with the devastating impact of her divorce. She told me the story of the night of her son's 21st birthday party. She stood there in the crowd as her ex-husband gave a speech, his new lady friend by his side.

"As he spoke, I heard this sound in my ears. It was a quiet whisper, but the words were unmistakable: 'Bitch, bitch...' With shock I recognised the voice as mine. I had thought I was okay, I had thought I was at peace with my husband's new relationship. But I wasn't. There were still deep hurts in need of healing."

Consider your own struggle with anger and bitterness. Bring this to the Lord in prayer.



church below the rooftops

Think of an experience in your own life which you would describe as a 'wilderness'? With what temptations (e.g. bitterness, despair, acceptance of a lie) did you wrestle?

In one of your present struggles, make an act of faith:

- prayerfully in your heart
- consolidated by a practical action

Be a game-changer

A parish priest gave this empowering response in a brief and friendly interaction outside church one Sunday. It went something like this:

'Father, meet my friend Susan.'

'Hello, Susan, lovely to meet you. Are you from 'round here?'

'Yes, but not this parish. (*Then, cynically...*) We're not as forward-thinking where I come from. Actually, I would describe myself as a disillusioned Catholic.'

'A disillusioned Catholic! Ah, so what exciting things are you doing to make your parish less disillusioning?!'



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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