



ST. MARY'S  
ON THE HIGHLANDS

## The Second Sunday in Lent



Lent II, March 1

## Collect

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O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

## John 3:1-17

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There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

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Lent II, March 1

## FOR THE REVOLUTION!

By Stuart Beale



In preparation to write this Lenten reflection, I had a conversation with my wife; we circled the passage several times, trying to think of a new or different perspective, something revolutionary. And there it was. My daughters discovered and fell in love with the musical *Hamilton* almost a year apart. In other words, the soundtrack has been on repeat in my home and car for around two years, but who's counting?

I can no longer hear the word “revolution” without hearing, “You want a Revolution, I want a revelation.” (The Schuyler Sisters, *Hamilton: An American Musical*, Lin-Manuel Miranda) in my head.

Revolution: a forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system. (dictionary.com)

Revelation: a surprising and previously unknown fact, especially one that is made known in a dramatic way. (dictionary.com)

Nicodemus was a religious elite. He was educated, disciplined, and committed. He followed the rules. He knew the law. He was doing everything “right”. He went to Jesus at night with questions. Jesus tells him something shocking; no matter how many rules he follows, no matter how carefully he keeps the law, unless he is born again of the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of God. Jesus presses further: “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?” In that moment, Nicodemus experiences a revelation.

With his words, Jesus overturns the old understanding of earning God's approval. The kingdom of God cannot be earned; it is freely given by the grace of God. It is entered by surrender, by belief, by being born of the Spirit. Jesus lays it out as simply as possible, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

It is a revolution of grace. The old system says, “Do more. Be better.” Jesus says, “Receive, believe, be made new.”

Lent reminds us how easily we slip back into striving, but the revelation remains: we are not saved by what we do for God, but by what God has done for us.

And that changes everything. For the Revolution!

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Lent II, March 1

## Hymn 150 “Forty Days and Forty Nights”

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Forty days and forty nights thou wast fasting in the wild;  
forty days and forty nights tempted, and yet undefiled.

Should not we thy sorrow share and from worldly joys abstain,  
fasting with unceasing prayer, strong with thee to suffer pain?

Then if Satan on us press, Jesus, Savior, hear our call!  
Victor in the wilderness, grant we may not faint or fall!

So shall we have peace divine: holier gladness ours shall be;  
round us, too, shall angels shine, such as ministered to thee.

Keep, O keep us, Savior dear, ever constant by thy side;  
that with thee we may appear at the eternal Eastertide.

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Hymn 150  
“Forty Days and Forty Nights”  
Words: George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870)  
Tune: Aus Der Tiefe Rufe Ich, composer  
Martin Herbst (1654-1681)  
Click the image to listen.



Lent II, March 1

## OUR VICTOR IN THE WILDERNESS

By Anna Dodd



“Forty Days and Forty Nights” has long been a hymn that shapes Lenten worship. Its simple melody and steady rhythm portray a long, faithful walk; step after step, into the wilderness right alongside Jesus.

The hymn draws us into the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ forty days in the desert, when he fasted and was tempted by the devil. Matthew and Luke describe three stark and very human trials: the need for food, the desire for certainty and protection, and the lure of power. Mark, in just a few words, reminds us how raw that time truly was. Jesus was alone, among wild animals, and strengthened by angels. This hymn does not soften His experience. Instead, it invites us to live it ourselves.

The text gives weight and significance to Jesus’ vulnerability. We sing that he was “tempted, and yet undefiled.” Jesus did not float above human struggle. He entered it fully. The hunger, the weariness, the pressure - these are not symbolic obstacles. They are the real conditions of a human life. But because he resisted in the very places where we so often fail - our physical desires, our longing for safety, our craving for control - his obedience to the Father ultimately led to the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Without the truth of Jesus’ nature - both fully God and fully human - His sacrifice on the cross would be rendered moot. Israel wandered for forty years and struggled to trust God, ultimately failing to stay faithful. Where Israel failed, Jesus remains victorious. He answered every earthly and spiritual temptation with Scripture. He chose to rely on God, refused to test God, and worshiped God alone.

When I sing this hymn, I remember not only Christ’s strength, but also His closeness and fervent desire to remain with me. In that closeness, I put my hope in the Savior, fully God and fully Man, who met temptation in the dust and silence of the wilderness and who still walks with me through the deserts of my life. My prayer for St. Mary’s is that as you face the obstacles that Satan sets in your path, you would have faith to call upon Jesus; that He would send the Holy Spirit and his angels to minister to you in weakness, and that ultimately His name be praised through our obedience and faithfulness.

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