



Wednesday Prayer

First Sunday in Lent – Safely into the Wilderness

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

Luke 4:1-4

In a recent study group with my church, we were asked to share about a time we felt truly free. I think of this in terms of when and where I feel truly safe and free to be myself. One after another, we shared times outdoors in nature when we felt free, safe, and felt the presence of God. Stories of Boundary Waters trips, walks in the woods, fishing, gardening, all sorts of wilderness adventures were shared, feelings of being free and safe.

Jesus retreats to the wilderness, a garden, or goes out in a fishing boat often throughout the Gospels – a time to reflect and receive the Spirit. In this Gospel story, Jesus is tempted by the devil over and over, and he has the power to rebuke the devil and his ways. Jesus was hungry and vulnerable, and the devil knew this was an opportunity to exploit his vulnerability. But Jesus was not having it.

This past month I've been with three different church groups, talking with youth about the power they have to keep themselves safe, and talking with their mentors and parents about the power they have to support them on this journey. Some remarkable young people shared the strength they can show if someone approaches them online, attempting to exploit a vulnerability they may have. These young people were not having it. Equipping them with the knowledge and tools to keep themselves safe, they can rebuke the temptations brought forth by unsafe people whether online or in person.

Let us venture into the wilderness with the assurance of safety, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Gracious God, we pray for children who suffer in the silence and secrecy of sexual abuse. Help them find a safe adult who will listen and act on their behalf to end the abuse and support their healing. May all people watch for signs of sexual abuse and work to set up protective barriers in their church and community to keep all children safe. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Share our [Lenten Prayer Series](#) with your church leaders and others so we may keep all children and those who care for children in our prayers.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.