

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS

First Sunday of Lent – Year B Choices, Choices!

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Like ourselves, Jesus has choices. Entering (as best we can) Jesus' mind at the commencement of his ministry (Mark 1:12-15), we witness his encounter with John the Baptist, who has emerged from contemplative time in the desert, courageously calling for repentance and proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. John baptises Jesus. Elsewhere Jesus says of John – greater has never been born of woman. What a mighty man he was! I'm reminded of that Russian politician Alexei Navalny - prepared to suffer the consequences for what is right rather than fly below the authority's radar.

The Spirit descends on Jesus and the Father hails him as "beloved Son". Wow! Jesus' response is the model for us.

First a retreat – the Spirit inspires him to take contemplation time in the wilderness. We can imagine what inducements Satan might have tried to make Jesus abandon his mission.

"C'mon – God has just claimed you as his beloved Son – you are the man – numero uno! You can do anything; have anything you want! Imagine the magic you can do – you can really go places! Don't waste your talents with these peasants – you're for the big time."

And we can imagine Jesus' strength, supported by angels, in resisting Satan's blandishments. Instead we visualise him prayerfully, reflectively discerning just what the Father wants of him.

Confident of the Father's will, he knows the cost. As the pieces fall into place, John is arrested and Jesus, focussed by his desert experience, begins his ministry in his home region of Galilee – among the ordinary people where most of his ministry will take place.

Here is the model par excellence for us. Quiet, prayerful contemplation of what the Father wants for me? Is it the easy, self-centred way of fame, fortune, power, glamour and self-interest? Or is it the selfless, self-sacrificing way of John and Alexei? How do we, like Jesus, bring the Good News of the Kingdom among the ordinary people and circumstances of our lives? Lent is the best time for contemplation of what the Father wants of us.