

We are ambassadors for Christ

2 Cor 5:20

We read in Mark 1:29-39 that **'Rising very early before dawn, Jesus left and went off to a deserted place, where He prayed.'** After this, He and His disciples went to nearby villages to teach and heal. Jesus is firmly rooted in prayer and solitude before He proclaims the Good News. And so it is with us on our Lenten journey when St Paul says that **'We are ambassadors for Christ.'** for we need the deep breath of prayer to carry out our mission daily. We are called to be **'ambassadors for Christ'** by the way we live and proclaim the Good News as Christ did.

What is God asking of me now? Is anything holding me back?

Reflect on how you can be an Ambassador for Christ this Lent.

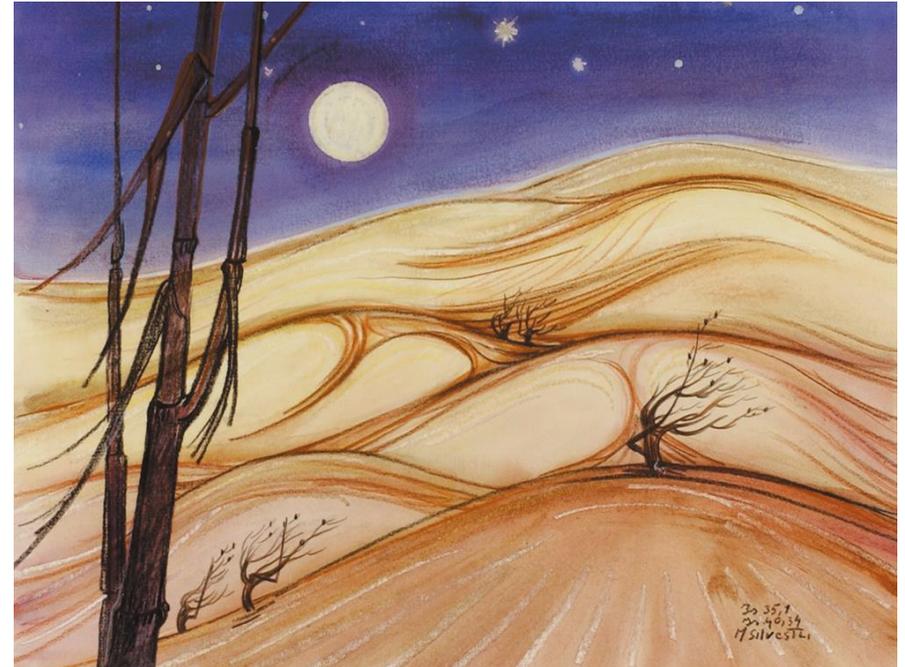
The most vital qualities of an ambassador is presence, building bridges and relationships between peoples and countries and nurturing hope and reconciliation. As the global pandemic brings suffering and death to many we can be present to one another, holding hope in our hearts on our Lenten journey towards Easter. As ambassadors for Christ this Lent,

'If I can help at least one person to have a better life by listening to their concerns, helping them materially or spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep and walking arm in arm with those who are lonely...then we will have entered into the reality of people's lives and know the power of love and tenderness.' (Pope Francis EG 270)

*Growing in love ...
that's the aim of our Lenten journey.
Love for God and our neighbour
for Love has no borders!*

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be tempted.

Matthew 4:1



*We are ambassadors for Christ,
and the appeal we make in Christ's name is:
be reconciled to God.*

2 Cor 5:20

*Lent,
A Path of Hope
2021*



On Ash Wednesday, we enter the Season of Lent and so begin our journey of Hope. Lent is a time of preparation for Easter and so the whole meaning of this 40 day period is the Paschal Mystery: a **Path of Hope** from darkness into the Light of the Risen Lord. Nature itself accompanies us on our Lenten journey as during the 40 days we move from the darkness of Winter into the light of the Spring season. Indeed, the word Lent itself is derived from an old English word meaning 'lengthen' when the Spring days become brighter and longer.

Reflect on your personal experience of Lent over the years. Can I see Lent now as a Path of Hope during which I can 'Be converted and return to the Lord with all my heart?' (Joel 2:12) Lent is a time of listening to the Word of God, of conversion, reconciliation, prayer and fasting. 'What am I giving up for Lent' is a question many may be asking themselves. Pope Francis reflects on ways of fasting that help us to grow in love and compassion for others on the Lenten **Path of Hope**.

Fast from hurting words...and speak kind words

Fast from sadness...and be filled with joy

Fast from anger...and be filled with patience

Fast from anxiety...and be filled with hope

Fast from worries...and trust in God

Fast from selfishness...and be compassionate

Fast from grudges...and be reconciled

Fast from words...and be silent so you can listen

Fast from busyness...and be still and prayerful

*Jesus was led by the Spirit
out into the desert to be tempted*
Matthew 4:1

After his baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert for 40 days to pray and prepare for his public ministry, during which time he is tempted. Lent too is a time for us to enter into the desert without fear because we are not alone but led by the Spirit who will guide us on our Lenten journey. Why the desert and what does it mean for us? **Imagine for a few moments that you are in a desert. What do you notice and feel about being there?**

It may be the absolute silence, the absence of any words or noise that you notice and that very silence makes room for the Word: the Word of God that speaks to your heart. It is in the silence of the desert that one finds a renewed intimacy with God and the possibility for conversion. Jesus often withdrew daily to deserted places to pray and to listen to the Father. (Luke 5:16) This Lent Jesus invites you to enter the **Oratory of your Heart** in moments of silence, listening and prayer as Marie Louise did. The desert is a place of life because speaking with the Lord in the silence gives us new life again '**speaking to the Lord face to face, as one speaks to a friend.**' (Exodus 33:11)

The desert is a place of solitude

For some the silence and solitude of the desert is by choice, but today there are many 'deserts' near us. These are lonely and neglected or homeless and marginalised people who live in enforced solitude and reach out for help. The pandemic has highlighted this loneliness. And so our journey in the Lenten desert is a journey of love towards the weakest to bring them hope and companionship.

*Prayer, fasting, works of love and mercy.
This is the path of the Lenten desert.*