

## **Friday, March 14: A Horse with No Name**

*Written by Elaine Ellis Thomas, Rector, All Saints Episcopal Parish, Hoboken, NJ*

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3BCSIFo2mLFFhSsg0QwpPw?si=AdYHEswRSRSOtazCe72qqg>

*I've been through the desert  
On a horse with no name  
It felt good to be out of the rain  
In the desert, you can remember your name  
'Cause there ain't no one for to give you no pain.*

As the youngest of six, the soundtrack of my childhood was whatever my older siblings happened to be playing on their transistor radios or little 45rpm record players. Too young to understand that the band America's song *A Horse with No Name* was controversial and even banned in some countries since apparently "horse" is a euphemism for "heroin," something about this song resonated with that little girl who spent a lot of her time playing in solitude.

During Lent, the Church remembers the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. Whereas Mark and Luke imply that the temptations of the devil happened over the course of the forty days (Mark 1:12 and Luke 4:2), Matthew tells us that "He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished" (4:2) and *then* the Tempter comes.

*On the first part of the journey  
I was looking at all the life  
There were plants and birds and rocks and things  
There was sand and hills and rings  
The first thing I met was a fly with a buzz  
And the sky with no clouds  
The heat was hot, and the ground was dry  
But the air was full of sound*

Jesus is baptized by John and is then "led" or "compelled" into the desert by the Holy Spirit. Maybe that first day was a day of observing and listening to "air full of sound." As the song continues through additional days, the lyrics speak of sunburn and rivers run dry. It's easy enough to imagine Jesus hungering and thirsting in a desiccated landscape.

Yet as the song continues, "in the desert you can remember your name." Jesus had been named: Beloved. This time in the wilderness gave him the silence, the solitude away from those who would cling to him, try to mold him to their purposes, distract him from his calling as Beloved. Out here with the "plants and birds and rocks and things," there is no one diverting his attention, giving him pain, at least not until the end.

The Tempter knows who he is, too, just as, for forty days, Jesus has embraced his identity, has remembered his name. The Tempter knows he is the Beloved, and the Tempter's job is to divert him from his path. But at the end of these forty days, Jesus *knows* who he is. The Tempter is powerless.

Jesus has been out here, out of the rain, away from the noise, where he can remember his name. By the end of the temptations, the end of the forty days, nothing will be able to change his course, because he knows who he is, he has remembered his name - Beloved, the savior of the world.