



Sunday 22nd February 2026

The First Sunday of Lent

Gospel Reading

Matthew 4.1-11

The Temptation of Jesus

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written,

"One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you",
and "On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him."

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Other Readings: Genesis 2:15-17; 3.1-7 Psalm 32 Romans 5.12-19

Homily

Our Gospel reading is set immediately after Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Straight away, he was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for a period of 40 days. There he fasted and prayed and reflected, no doubt, on his mission in life. Without food, he became hungry and weak and a ready target for the devil who confronts him with three temptations or challenges.

At his baptism, God the Father had said to him, "You are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased". In his temptations the devil is challenging him to prove it. Is it really true what you heard? Are you really the Son of God? His first temptation is to satisfy his hunger by turning a stone into bread. The second is to stage a public and spectacular miracle in

Jerusalem, to prove to everyone that he was the Son of God. Jump off the highest point of the temple and God will send his angels to save you. No need for the hard work and the suffering, take the easy way. The third is a challenge to his incarnation, to his humble mission of living the life of a human being, of doing his Father's will and carrying out his plan of salvation. Look, the devil says, in a colossal lie, I can give you glory and authority over the whole world now, if you just worship *me*.

So, how does Jesus respond to these temptations? Jesus refuses to doubt the Father's care for him and the rightness of the path that is set before him. Neither does he fall for the devil's lies, nor, in the second temptation, the devil's twisting of Scripture to suit his own ends. Instead, Jesus counter-attacks with the word of God, with quotations from Scripture. In fact, all from the book of Deuteronomy. But he was not just quoting words, he was declaring truths that he really believed. Firstly, he quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 - "Man does not live by bread alone" . . . which continues "But on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord". In other words, he is stressing that, despite his hunger, he trusts in the Father. Secondly, he quotes from Deuteronomy 6:16 - "Do not put the Lord your God to the test". And finally, he quotes from Deuteronomy 6:13 - "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him".

It also helps us when we are tempted to know our Scriptures and, therefore, God's way of doing things. It is also helpful to recognise that temptation often comes when we are tired or hungry or feeling weak for some other reason. Conversely, it can also come when we feel strong, when things are going really well, and we think they should continue in the same way. We are then disturbed when temptations or problems arise. But Jesus' time in the wilderness came straight after an important event in his life and, yet, he was strengthened and built up for his future ministry by the way he dealt with his temptations.

In the same way, testing can be God's preparation of us, to strengthen us for the work that he has called us to do. So, during Lent, it would be a good plan for all of us to spend extra time with God and his word in the Scriptures, to prepare us for times of testing. It may help to join a Lent course or read a Christian book but, whatever is most helpful, let us resolve to do it.

Conversation Questions

1. How do you respond to temptations? What do you find most helpful?
2. What do you think would be most helpful for you to do during Lent? Can you resolve to do it?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,*

*and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness,
so may we know your power to save;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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