



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



1st Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

Fr. David Rosenberg
Institute for Spiritual Direction
visit us at <http://www.ISDministries.org/>

"It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" (Luke 4:8)

This first Sunday of Lent is the Gospel account (Luke 4:1-13) of the three temptations that follow the baptism of Jesus. There are two Old Testament traditions about the devil that play out in the desert.

One tradition is the devil as a divinely assigned tester, using the desert as a testing ground, as the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness. These temptations reveal to us Jesus' heart. The second tradition shows the devil as the enemy of God's purposes. Overtly and covertly the devil is set on destroying God's plan for salvation. Here, the devil tries to seduce Jesus into temptations that go against the divine will of the Father.

The temptations immediately follow the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. As the baptism revealed his divinity, so the temptation story emphasizes his humanity. As Hebrews puts it, he *"was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned"* (4:15).

The temptations are focused on Jesus' mission and the way it will be accomplished. The devil tempts him to do it in ways other than the way God wills. Jesus' responses are all quotations from the book of Deuteronomy, *"Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him,"* which focuses on God's will for Israel. Jesus is obedient to the law of God, insisting on following God's will, not his own or the devil's. After the third temptation, Luke notes, *"When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time."* He will try to tempt him again, at the crucifixion.

In a sense, then, the temptation scene anticipates the ultimate battle, the eschatological contest between good and evil. Jesus' faithfulness here is never undone. The devil will try, but he will not succeed.

Though we know the outcome of Jesus' three temptations, we should reflect on them, as we do not know the outcome in our own life. In the first temptation, Satan appeals to our physical needs, in this case hunger, with the promise that our mortal hunger will be satiated, and that we can set "God in our pocket" and take him out only when we need him when times get tough. The second temptation shows Satan the Accuser and Divider, where he convinces us to blame others for our sinful actions, dividing us against each other. The third temptation shows Satan luring us into a prideful life with promises of worldly power.

Resisting temptation and remaining faithful was not easy for Jesus (remember the agony in the garden), just as it is not easy for us. Experiencing in prayer the intensity of these struggles might help us to persevere in our own struggles and challenges this Lenten Season, as the ultimate desire of the heart overcome the temptations, urging us to ascend the Pilgrims Way of the Cross, as we follow Jesus to the New Jerusalem, our destiny!

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

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.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him,
"To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered him,
*"It is written,
'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"*

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him,
"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, *"It is said,
'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The Gospel of the Lord