



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



First Sunday of Lent, Cycle A

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

'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Matt 4:4

Our Gospel reading this First Sunday of Lent is always an account of the temptations of Jesus in the desert. In the stark desert setting Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Here Jesus calls us to do the same, to reserve this special time each year for a time of fasting and prayer. But, like many paradoxes in the spiritual life, fasting and prayer (and giving of our time, talent and treasure) can be a time of deep inner peace and joy as we seek the help of the Holy Spirit. There's something about "changing it up" that has a transformative power, especially when it's done in the name of Jesus Christ, His passion and His mercy.

Scripture scholars believe that one of Matthew's central purposes is to portray Jesus as the "New Moses." In the Old Testament Moses leads the people of God through the desert for 40 years, delivering them from exile and sin toward Jerusalem and the Promised Land. This Gospel draws a full picture of Jesus as the "New Moses" as He experiences a 40-day fast and multiple temptations from Satan, which ultimately draws us toward the New Jerusalem.

The temptation of turning stones into bread help us recall both the manna God fed the people in the wilderness as well as the Eucharistic bread. The true nourishment that sustains our Lenten journey is the loving promise of God's mercy: *"one lives... by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

The second and third temptations teach us that God is sovereign. Because Jesus is both God and man, He struggles in His humanity yet triumphs over temptation. In reflection, we are called to reflect on our own temptations and struggles. Our moment of inspiration comes as we realize that through grace we are sustained in our Lenten journey, and that is triumph and victory we look forward to.

In Jesus' victory over temptation and sin, as in ours, Satan departs and the urge for temptation abates. In our journey we are lifted in a moment of illumination, filled us with joy as we enter the sanctuary of the heart, sustained and comforted by our own angel.

As we reflect and pray on this yearly observances of holy Lent, may we grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ, and be drawn to pursue their effects.

*A clean heart, create for me, O God.
O, Lord open my lips
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. (Ps 51)*

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted 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 splendor; 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.

The Gospel of the Lord