

LIVING THE GOSPEL
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
Feb 21, 2010



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Closing Prayer

All: Compassionate God, you look beyond our weakness to call us to holiness. Help us to grow in your grace this Lent, that one day we may stand everlastingly before your majesty and holiness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

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The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;
Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;
Emmaus Journey – www.emmausjourney.org

Theme: "Man shall not live by bread alone."

Gathering Prayer

All: Father, through our observance of Lent, help us to understand the meaning of your Son's death and resurrection, and teach us to reflect it in our lives. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:1-13

¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit ² for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

⁵ And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours."

⁸ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you,' ¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

¹² And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Gospel Notes

1-13. Here we see the devil interfere in Jesus' life for the first time. He does so brazenly. Our Lord is about to begin his public ministry, so it is a particularly important point in his work of salvation.

"The whole episode is a mystery which man cannot hope to understand-God submitting to temptation, letting the evil one have his way. But we can mediate upon it, asking our Lord to help us understand the teaching it contains" (Bl. J. Escriva, *Christ is passing by*, 61).

Christ, true God and true man, made himself like us in everything except sin (cf. Phil 2:7; Heb 2:7; 4:15) and voluntarily underwent temptations. "How fortunate we are," exclaims the Cure of Ars, "how lucky to have a God as a model. Are we poor? We have a God who is born in a stable, who lies in a manger. Are we despised? We have a God who led the way, who was crown with thorns, dressed in a filthy red cloak and treated as a madman. Are we tormented by pain and suffering? Before our eyes we have a God covered with wounds, dying in unimaginable pain. Are we being persecuted? How can we dare complain when we have a God who is being put to death by executioners? Finally, are we being tempted by the demon? We have our lovable Redeemer; he also was tempted by the demon and was twice taken up by that hellish spirit: therefore, no matter what the suffering, pains or temptations we are experiencing, we always have, everywhere, our God leading the way for us and assuring us of victory as long as we genuinely desire it" (*Selected Sermons*, First Sunday of Lent).

Jesus teaches us therefore that no one should regard himself as incorruptible and proof against temptation; he shows us how we should deal with temptation and exhorts us to have confidence in his mercy, since he himself experienced temptation (cf. Heb 2:18).

For further explanation of this passage, see the notes on Matthew 4:3-11.

13. Our Lord's temptation sum up every kind of temptation man can experience: "Scripture would not have said", St Thomas comments, "that once all the temptation ended the devil departed from him, unless

God - that perfect man "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"(Eph 4:13; cf. Acts 2:36) "the whole Christ," in St. Augustine's expression.

2096 Adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion. To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve," says Jesus, citing *Deuteronomy*.(Lk 4:8; Cf. Deut 6:13)

2119 *Tempting God* consists in putting his goodness and almighty power to the test by word or deed. Thus Satan tried to induce Jesus to throw himself down from the Temple and, by this gesture, force God to act.(Cf. Lk 4:9) Jesus opposed Satan with the word of God: "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test."(Deut 6:16) The challenge contained in such tempting of God wounds the respect and trust we owe our Creator and Lord. It always harbors doubt about his love, his providence, and his power.(Cf. 1 Cor 10:9; Ex 17:2-7; Ps 95:9)

2855 The final doxology, "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever," takes up again, by inclusion, the first three petitions to our Father: the glorification of his name, the coming of his reign, and the power of his saving will. But these prayers are now proclaimed as adoration and thanksgiving, as in the liturgy of heaven.(Cf. Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:13) The ruler of this world has mendaciously attributed to himself the three titles of kingship, power, and glory.(Cf. Lk 4:5-6) Christ, the Lord, restores them to his Father and our Father, until he hands over the kingdom to him when the mystery of salvation will be brought to its completion and God will be all in all.(1 Cor 15:24-28)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Also remembering the first temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden, what is always at the root of temptation?
2. What part did sacred Scripture play both in the temptation of Jesus and in his overcoming the temptation?
3. When was the next occasion when Satan tempted Jesus? (See Luke 23:33-43) How does it compare to this occasion?

you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. ¹³ For, "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Catechism of The Catholic Church

538 The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him.(Cf. Mk 1:12-13) At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him "until an opportune time".(Lk 4:13)

695 *Anointing*. The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit,(Cf. 1 In 2:20:27; 2 Cor 1:21) to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation, called "chrismation" in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. Christ (in Hebrew "*messiah*") means the one "anointed" by God's Spirit. There were several anointed ones of the Lord in the Old Covenant, pre-eminently King David.(Cf. Ex 30:22-32; 1 Sam 16:13) But Jesus is God's Anointed in a unique way: the humanity the Son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit established him as "Christ."(Cf. Lk 4:18-19; Isa 61:1) The Virgin Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit who, through the angel, proclaimed him the Christ at his birth, and prompted Simeon to come to the temple to see the Christ of the Lord.(Cf. Lk 2:11,26-27) The Spirit filled Christ and the power of the Spirit went out from him in his acts of healing and of saving.(Cf. Lk 4:1; 6:19; 8:46) Finally, it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.(Cf. Rom 1:4; 8:11) Now, fully established as "Christ" in his humanity victorious over death, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until "the saints" constitute - in their union with the humanity of the Son of

the matter of all sins were included in the three temptations already related. For the causes of temptation are the causes of desires—namely, lust of the flesh, desires for glory, eagerness for power" (*Sunma theologiae*, III, q. 41, a. 4 ad 4).

By conquering every kind of temptation, Jesus shows us how to deal with the snares of the devil. It was as a man that he was tempted and as a man that he resisted: "He did not act as God, bringing his power into play; if he had done so, how could we have availed of his example? Rather, as man he made use of the resources which he has in common with us" (St Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii sec. Lucam, in loc.*).

He wanted to show us the methods to use to defeat the devil—prayer, fasting, watchfulness, not dialoguing with temptation, having the words of God's Scripture on our lips and putting our trust in the Lord.

"Until an opportune time", that is, until it is time for Jesus to undergo his passion. The devil often appears in the course of our Lord's public life (cf., for example, Mk 12:28), but it will be at the Passion—"this is your hour, and the time for the power of darkness"(Lk 22:53)—that he will be most clearly seen in his role as tempter. Jesus will forewarn his disciples about this and once more assure them of victory (cf. Jn 12:31; 14:30). Through the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, the devil will be overpowered once and for all. And by virtue of Christ's victory we are enabled to overcome all temptations.

Gospel Reflection

Temptations by their very nature are luring—they present us with a seeming good we do not presently have but want. Without a powerfully attractive lure, temptations simply don't exist. For example, if a tray of veggies and a tray of chips and dip are placed before us, few of us would be "tempted" by the veggies. Let's face it: the real temptation and need for resistance derives from the lure of the chips and dip. Built into every temptation is a kind of test (included in the meaning of the Latin, *temptare*): choosing a real good over a perceived but false good. Temptations always lure us to false good. The gospel for this Sunday is the familiar story of Jesus' three temptations. Jesus was faced with three perceived goods. He clearly passed the test by choosing to remain faithful to who he was: "the Son of God" embarking on his saving mission.

Jesus was "led by the Spirit into the desert . . . to be tempted." Each temptation put to him by the devil involved some misguided personal gain: seeking easy solutions to human hungers, pursuing "power and glory," defying death. By resisting these temptations Jesus shows us that our true gain is found not in satisfying ourselves but in something better: utter fidelity to God. Temptations always present us with the choice between personal gain and something even better: the goodness and holiness that comes from serving God and doing good for others. This same choice between self-satisfaction and fidelity to God frees us, like Jesus, to be who we are meant to be, persons "led by the Spirit."

Not even the Son of God was exempt from being tested! We can expect no less in our own lives. Temptation isn't an indication of sinfulness; rather, it is an occasion for showing that our lives are turned to God, in whom we find our very identity and being. Like Jesus, temptations and our very resistance to them strengthen us in our choices for goodness and holiness. In making these choices we are continually choosing who we want to be: those who faithfully serve God by doing good for others. Temptations' lure to self-satisfaction is overcome by an even stronger lure: growth in holiness and transformation into ever more beloved sons and daughters of God. Lent is a focused time to take the test of who we want to be. Let us pray that we all pass it well!

Living the Paschal Mystery

The ritual act of professing our faith during Sunday Mass is no substitution for *living* it in our daily lives. When we are tested by temptations, our faith is put to the test, too, and we are faced with a choice of who we are and how we want to live. Lent is a time to examine our choices.

Just as God led Israel to a "land flowing with milk and honey" (first reading), so will God lead us to salvation if we "call on the name of the Lord" (second *au*, reading). For us, though, our desert is the demands of everyday living, and our salvation is found on the cross. Each day we take up our cross and lay down our life for the sake of others, we are building strength to resist temptation and come to greater faith. Our simple acts of kindness are helping us resist temptation. Our doing well whatever the task at hand helps us resist temptation. Our complimenting another or offering a word of encouragement helps us resist temptation.

We don't have to go out into a desert to find temptation! But we do need God's nearness to resist it. And that God has promised us.

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Deut. 26:4-10

⁴ Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. ⁵ "And you shall make response before the LORD your God, 'A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶ And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. ⁷ Then we cried to the LORD the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; ⁸ and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; ⁹ and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O LORD, hast given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God; ...

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 91:1-2,10-15

¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, ² will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."...

¹⁰ no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. ¹¹ For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. ¹² On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. ¹⁴ Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. ¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him.

Second Reading — Romans 10:8-13

⁸ But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); ⁹ because, if