

## Learning from Jesus' Temptations

Every Lent, priests, nuns, monks, and many laypeople pray the following: "Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus encountered this truth in his temptations in the desert, another place in his ministry where he experienced the struggle of humanity.

The temptations begin, "If you are the Son of God..." All our temptations begin by doubting and challenging Jesus to prove himself. Although Jesus is all-powerful and all-good, we struggle to make sense of suffering and tragedies.

The temptations continue as Jesus is invited to satisfy himself, impress others, and skip suffering. But Jesus responds repeatedly in humility. In the desert he doesn't turn stones into bread. Later, he does something far greater; he turns bread and wine into himself. When tempted, we cry out to him to soften

the hard realities of our lives. And Jesus does just that. He suffers in his passion, dies, and rises again to become life-giving bread for us. He becomes manna in our desert.

When we wish for power, Jesus promises we will reign with him if we also let him suffer for us and we with him. The devil would have us take matters into our own hands, doubt God, and make him prove himself by our measures. Yet if we listen to Jesus, look at his answers, and learn from his life, then true power will be ours.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

### *For Reflection*

*What makes me question God the most?*

*How can God's word and Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection respond to that doubt?*



Piece: *Temptations of Christ* (detail), 1482  
Artist: Sandro Botticelli  
Location: Sistine Chapel

*When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.*

*Luke 4:13*

## Calendar

### Monday

MARCH 11

Lenten Weekday

Lv 19:1–2, 11–18

Mt 25:31–46

### Tuesday

MARCH 12

Lenten Weekday

Is 55:10–11

Mt 6:7–15

### Wednesday

MARCH 13

Lenten Weekday

Jon 3:1–10

Lk 11:29–32

### Thursday

MARCH 14

Lenten Weekday

Est C:12, 14–16, 23–25

Mt 7:7–12

### Friday

MARCH 15

Lenten Weekday

Ez 18:21–28

Mt 5:20–26

### Saturday

MARCH 16

Lenten Weekday

Dt 26:16–19

Mt 5:43–48

### Sunday

MARCH 17

Second Sunday of Lent

Gn 15:5–12, 17–18

Phil 3:17–4:1

or Phil 3:20–4:1

Lk 9:28b–36

# Dear Padre,

**In some books and movies, the devil is depicted as an all-powerful, unconquerable force. Is this the true image of Satan? What should be the Christian response toward the devil?**

In years of priesthood, I have infrequently encountered situations in which the presence of evil was palpable. Typically, they involved the abuse of someone innocent and vulnerable. These incidents remind me of my need for a deeper trust in God, and the strength of someone spiritually wiser than I, if such evil is to be repelled.

However, the usual way Satan operates is by subtly seducing us into confusion, complacency, and self-will. Indeed, isn't that the case in today's Gospel of Jesus' temptations in the desert?

Jesus experienced not only a frontal assault by the devil, but also the hunger, fear, and isolation that make all of us vulnerable to false gods of greed, security, or power. When the devil addressed him in his privation and



ANDREY POPOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

vulnerability, Jesus found ways to call upon God's word and power. Satan's attack was vanquished in the desert.

Likewise, our encounters with this real, fallen angel will persist. We will always be vulnerable, with the devil always watching for an opportune time. "One day at a time" can summarize our approach to evil.

We need to rely on God's power daily to lead us through a maze of choices. The next day we must again seek the same God-bestowed grace of wisdom and courage, calling on God to lead us in God's ways. In other words, God's grace is sufficient and available if we call upon it daily.

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## A Word from Pope Francis

*The devil wants you to quarrel among yourselves, because in this way he divides you, he defeats you, and he robs you of faith. Therefore, solidarity among brothers and sisters to defend the faith!....Go forward and don't let the devil divide you!*

—Visit to Bañado Norte, Paraguay, February 19, 2017