# The Summit Online Exploring the Word

# 1st Sunday of Lent, Year C

### **GOSPEL**

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Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.'

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him 'throw yourself down from here, for scripture says:

He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you,

and again:

They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said:

You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

(Luke 4:1-13)

# DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Numbers are often significant in the Bible—such as forty, which denotes an extended period. In the story of Noah, rain falls for forty days; the Israelites wandered for forty years in the desert; and both Elijah and Moses fasted for forty days before they had an encounter with God.
- Lent, a time of fasting, prayer and giving for all Christians, also runs for forty days; it is a special time of final preparation for people who will be receiving the sacraments at Easter.
- This text immediately follows Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of Luke. He was baptised in the lower reaches of the Jordan River, just north of where it enters the Dead Sea. This location is a particularly desolate and barren region of dry river beds (wadis) and steep, rocky cliffs that rise from the Jordan Valley.

 The temple precinct in Jerusalem was built on a mountain. It comprised the temple itself and several courtyards surrounded by a high wall. This is the parapet referred to in this text.

### **EXPLORING THE WORD**

Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness hearkens to the stories of Elijah and Moses, and his temptation hearkens to the severe testing that the people of Israel underwent when they too wandered in the desert. Israel was found wanting, succumbed to its temptations and worshipped false gods, but Jesus uses the word of God to defeat the power of evil: 'Man does not live on bread alone' (Deuteronomy 8:13) and 'You must worship the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 6:13). In testing Jesus, Satan is testing God himself, and he is dismissed from the story with the words 'You must not put the Lord your God to the test' (Deuteronomy 6:16). Jesus has reversed Israel's experience in the desert and become the founder of a new people.

- Do you, like Jesus, have the courage to become sons and daughters of God?
- Which of the temptations that Jesus faced—material security, power or prestige—challenges you the most?
- · How do you overcome temptation when it arises?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What are the great temptations in your life?
- In what ways have you been 'led by the Spirit through the wilderness'?
- 'Man does not live on bread alone.' What nourishes your spiritual life?
- Today's gospel depicts Jesus' struggle to remain true to himself and his faith. Spend some time reflecting on how you feel about the Rite of Election and the commitment you will make at Easter. Share your hopes and fears.
- Spend time this week contemplating the difficult periods of your life and how they led you to new understandings of yourself, others and God. Reach out to others who may be experiencing a difficult time in their lives.
- Use the response to today's psalm as your prayer this week.

Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.

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### SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The whole season of Lent-Easter-Pentecost has a fundamental integrity and unity to it, despite being divided into forty- and fifty-day timeframes, set on each side of the Easter celebration. The word 'Lent' is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word that means 'spring', and it was associated in the northern hemisphere with the seasonal change from winter and the lengthening of the days. The forty-day period of fasting and almsgiving in preparation for Easter was not firmly established until the fourth century; it also had strong catechumenal and baptismal overtones, as it was the final preparation time for people seeking baptism. This focus has been revised in recent years and, of course, the current catechumens have become part of that process.

- You could provide some historical information about the early church's initiation practices and their links to the current practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
- · You could talk about the history of the modern RCIA.
- Provide some background information about the common customs associated with Lent, such as the use of purple; the absence of decoration; the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving; and the ways that people observe Lent in their own homes.
- You could use the parish resource kit from Caritas to encourage participation in Project Compassion.

### SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

In the Scriptures, the desert or the wilderness is a place of great deprivation and hardship. We sometimes hear of people undergoing a 'dark night of the soul' or a 'desert experience'. It can be a time of testing. Often these experiences, however, lead to a new understanding of God or a renewed faith, in much the same way that God led God's people through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

# LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How is Lent observed in your parish? Do you use a Lenten program that could provide extra preparation for catechumens in the lead-up to receiving the sacraments?
- Style your prayer together as an act of commitment. Give the elect a taper to light from a central candle as they informally pledge to enter fully into the final stage of the journey. A suitable song could be Here I Am Lord (GA 496). Conclude with adaptations of the intercessions for the elect in the RCIA at §121.

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