

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.

