



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**First Sunday of Lent
March 9th 2025**

Theme: "Jesus, was led by the Spirit ² for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil."

Gathering Prayer

All: Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of 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 Focus

This gospel gives us the basis for our Lenten season. Jesus spends forty days in the desert, echoing the forty days Noah's Ark was afloat and the forty years the Israelites spent in the desert before entering the Promised Land. In that time, Jesus fast more intensely than we do. He also wrestles with the devil, coming face-to-face with what he needs to sacrifice in order to do and be what God intends for him. In fulfilling God's will, he will give up power and security that could easily be his. The gospel is clear that this is a temptation for Jesus-while he seems to bat away the devil's words easily, he faces these temptations as a human and probably feels that he could do more good for God if he were fed and powerful and safe. His intimate knowledge of his Father, though, helps

him remember that these are not the most important things and that God is calling him to something greater amid the sacrifices he will make.

Gospel Reflection

“Where is God” was the refrain posed by a sister who ministers in Port-au-Prince as she recounted to a group of religious leaders’ stories of immense suffering and death following the earthquake in Haiti. Was God in the earthquake? Did God send it to test our faith? How can we recognize the voice of a loving God in such times of desolation?

Today’s gospel shows Jesus in a similar time of struggle. He is returning from the Jordan, where he has just been baptized by John, a powerful experience of knowing the certainty of God’s delight in him as beloved Son. He has also sensed the Spirit making a home in him. The contrast between this idyllic scene at the river and his bleak struggle in the desert is stark. At stake in this struggle is the question of both who is God and who is Jesus as beloved Son of God. “*If you are the Son of God...*” taunts the tempter. And so it is with us, too, when great trials shake our self-understanding and cause us to question our reliance on God.

The readings today do not provide reasoned arguments in answer to these deep questions, but they do show us a way to engage the struggles as we are invited more deeply into the mystery of suffering, dying, and rising as God’s cherished ones. The reading from Deuteronomy reminds us of the long history of God’s saving deeds and asks us to declare these, to remind us that our faith in times of trouble is not baseless.

In the gospel, we see Jesus relying on the word of God to guide and strengthen him. He engages in a kind of Bible battle with the devil, a sobering reminder that anyone can quote Scripture to their own purposes. Jesus shows that daily immersion of ourselves in Scripture enables us to recognize the authentic voice of God and rejects the traitorous lead of tempter. Jesus unmasks the false allure of believing in a God who would prove divine love by acting like an indulgent parent, giving in to our every desire. He exposes the untruth of believing in a God whose power is displayed in ostentatious empires or in manipulating the laws of nature. His replies to the devil reveal that God does not send misfortune to test us, nor does God respond to “tests” that we construct in order to prove God’s loving nature. God is not a sadistic puppeteer who dallies with us to see whether we will keep steady in our faith. God is continually drawing us more deeply into the divine love, most especially in times of greatest adversity.

Lent provides us an opportunity to embrace anew such struggles as Jesus faced. Like him, we claim the power of the Spirit that has been given to us in baptism and daily immerse ourselves in the word. Clarity in hearing that word comes when we go apart to deserted spaces and when we fast so as to sharpen our hunger for God and for acting in solidarity with God’s starving people.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Deut. 26:4-10

⁴Then 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. ⁶And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. ⁷Then 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; ⁸and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; ⁹and 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 — Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

R: *Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble. (R)*

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, say to the Lord, "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust." **(R)**

No evil shall befall you, nor shall affliction come near your tent, for to his angels he has given command about you, that they guard you in all your ways. **(R)**

Upon their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the asp and the viper; you shall trample down the lion and the dragon. **(R)**

Because he clings to me, I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he acknowledges my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in distress; I will deliver him and glorify him. **(R)**

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 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)

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.** God's word plays a prominent role in this gospel. How do you pray with Scripture? How could you find ways to more time with it?
- 2.** When has Scripture offered you strength and encouragement during a difficult time?
- 3.** It is rather chilling to hear the devil twist the words of Scripture to suit his purposes. Where do you hear Gods word being misused or misappropriated to suit an agenda?

Closing Prayer

All: God of Israel, hear our prayers, that they may edify our church, our world, and our hearts. 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.