

Homily > Lent I ©, March 9, 2025.

Conquering Temptations and Growing in Holiness

As Lent begins, we reflect on the Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. The Church places these stories at the start of this sacred season because temptations come to all of us—not just to Jesus. In fact, it feels almost as though we are genetically programmed to yield to them. But the good news is, we don't have to succumb. We can learn to face and conquer temptations, just as Jesus did.

In today's readings, we see different ways God helps His people in the face of temptation. The first reading recounts the ancient Jewish practice of offering first fruits to God during the harvest festival. This act was a way of thanking God for His deliverance from slavery in Egypt and for strengthening them through their trials and temptations in the desert. It's a reminder that God helps us in our times of difficulty.

The Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 91) beautifully ties in with Satan's third temptation of Jesus. The devil challenges Jesus to misuse His divine power to avoid suffering, but Jesus resists. In the second reading, St. Paul warns the early Christians not to return to the old ways of the Mosaic Laws. He tells them that salvation comes through acknowledging Jesus as the risen Lord and Savior.

Scholars suggest that the temptations Jesus faced in the desert were more than just physical tests—they were symbolic of the inner struggles He faced throughout His ministry. The devil's aim was to distract Jesus from His mission of saving humanity by offering shortcuts: political power, personal convenience, and the avoidance of suffering. Yet Jesus resisted every time, showing us the power of faith and determination in overcoming the evil one's schemes.

So, how can we face our temptations, as Jesus did? First, we need to use the same tools Jesus employed: prayer, penance, and the Word of God. Like Jesus, we too are tempted by the desire for sinful pleasures, easy wealth, and power. We can often be drawn to unjust means to achieve good ends. But just as Jesus overcame temptation, we are called to conquer our own through prayer, penance, and especially through meditative reading of Scripture. The Bible strengthens us, enabling us to “know Jesus more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly,” as the saying goes.

Remember, we are never tempted beyond the strength God gives us. St. John assures us in his letter: “The One Who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). We are not alone in our struggles; God's power within us is greater than the temptation we face.

During this Lent, and throughout the rest of the year, let us grow in holiness by deepening our relationship with God. How can we do this? By committing ourselves to prayer, reconciliation, and sharing: Make time for God every day—speak to Him, listen to Him. Repent for our sins, renew our hearts through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and forgive others as we ask for forgiveness. Serve others with selflessness, practice almsgiving, and help those in need.

By doing these things, we grow stronger in our faith and become more resistant to the temptations that come our way. As we prepare for Easter, let us remember that this season is not just about giving up something for Lent; it's about giving more of ourselves to God, through prayer, penance, and service to others.

May we follow the example of Jesus and emerge from this Lent more holy, more grounded in God's Word, and more prepared to face the challenges of life.