

March 9, 2025  
First Sunday of Lent  
Luke 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'"

Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

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

### **Background:**

Luke ends his description of the Baptism of Jesus with the voice of God proclaiming: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22) At the time of Jesus, people believed that such a statement would have been heard throughout the spirit world. The numerous evil spirits that roamed the world would have felt challenged by such a statement and its truthfulness. The first verses of the Book of Job contain a dialogue between Satan and God that illustrates the thinking of the ancient peoples:

"One day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "Whence do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming the earth and patrolling it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job, and that there is no one on earth like him, blameless and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil?" But Satan answered the LORD and said, "Is it for nothing that Job is God-fearing? Have you not surrounded him and his family and all that he has with your protection? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his livestock are spread over the land. But now put forth your hand and touch anything that he has, and surely he will blaspheme you to your face." (Job 1:6-11)

While the reader may experience their daily reality very differently, it is helpful to have some appreciation for how ancient people understood their world and the role of evil spirits. Luke's gospel reflects the understanding of people of the day. People would expect that the evil spirits would respond to God's statement of confidence and delight in who can withstand a temptation for bread/food, rule/power, and defiance of nature/power. With quotes from their sacred texts, (Deuteronomy 8:3, and 6:13, 16) Jesus validates the truth of what was spoken of him by the Father, and dismisses the trickery of the devil in a way that Adam and Eve were not able to.

Also, the temptations themselves can be seen as an attempt to get Jesus to use power; personal, social, and religious; in a way that would act contrary to his solidarity with being fully human. Rejecting the use of power aligns Jesus with being fully human and vulnerable. Luke is setting the stage for the rest of Jesus' ministry through the choices Jesus makes. Unlike the Jewish people who went into the wilderness and repeatedly complained and abandoned their relationship with Yahweh, Jesus remains faithful. He is the one more powerful that John spoke of. "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen

the thongs of his sandals.” (Luke 3:16) Luke ends his account of Jesus’ temptation with the suggestion that the tempter left Jesus but will look for another opportunity to return. That opportunity will come at his passion.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Have you ever taken on a period of difficulty or hardship in order to achieve some goal or be a better person?
2. Have you ever thought of your difficulties or challenges as being the way God or the Holy Spirit was using to fashion you into the person that reflects more truly God’s desire within you?
3. Who are the people in your life who have used hardship or struggle in ways that have made them better persons? Have there also been people who have been beaten down by their hardships? Can you identify what contributed to either?
4. Do you sense any solidarity with those experiencing hardship and struggle?
5. If so, how is that solidarity expressed in your life?
6. What does it mean for you that Jesus was tempted?
7. Why do you think we begin every Lent with a gospel reading that focuses on Jesus being tempted?
8. Can you take some time now to talk with God about the difficult periods in your life, your demeanor as we enter into another Lenten season, or some other concern that arose from this gospel text?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to [annemarie.lom@gmail.com](mailto:annemarie.lom@gmail.com)

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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### **Excerpts from the readings for March 9, 2025, the First Sunday of Lent**

Moses spoke to the people, saying: "The priest shall receive the basket from you and shall set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God. Then you shall declare before the Lord, your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong, and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you have given me.' And having set them before the Lord, your God, you shall bow down in his presence."

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

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.  
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.  
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; I will answer him; I will be with him in distress, and deliver him and glorify him.

Brothers and sisters: What does Scripture say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart—that is, the word of faith that we preach—for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. Scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, One does not live on bread alone." Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said, "It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve." Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels to guard you, and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

### **Excerpts from Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15; Romans 10:8-13; and Luke 4:1-13**

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for March 9th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The gospel for this first Sunday of Lent is from Luke, where Jesus goes into the desert for forty days, at the end of which he is tempted by the devil. Jesus is hungry, and the devil first tempts him saying, "Command this stone to become bread." The devil also offers Jesus power over all the kingdoms of the world, if Jesus would worship him, and after that he tells Jesus to throw himself down from the temple, because "God will make his angels guard and support you." Jesus replies with scriptural references to each temptation: "One does not live on bread alone;" "You shall worship the Lord God and serve him alone;" and "You shall not put the Lord God to the test."

The other readings have additional references to appropriate behavior before the Lord, the protection of angels, and trusting the scriptures that advise us to call upon the Lord and believe in him. In the first reading from Deuteronomy, Moses instructs Israel to offer first fruits to the Lord, and "bow down in his presence." Psalm 91 proclaims, "Say to the Lord, 'My refuge, my God in whom I trust'... Because he clings to me and acknowledges me, I will deliver him... angels will guard you, and bear you up, and no evil shall befall you." In the second reading, from the Letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "Scripture says, 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.' If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him, you will be saved." Jesus has knowledge and understanding of scripture that gets him through this tough, transformative, and challenging situation. He has ready responses to the devil's tests, quoting from Deuteronomy, chapter 8, and two places in chapter 6. The devil proves to know some scripture too, reciting from Psalm 91, which we hear proclaimed at the Mass. Paul, also, quotes two scriptures, from Deuteronomy 30 and Isaiah 28, in the space of

four verses in our reading from Romans. Knowing God's word readies us for hard times. As we enter into this Lenten time of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, it is a timely reminder to review the verse Jesus referred to first, adding for context the one prior verse as well (Dt 8:2-3): "Remember how for these forty years the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the wilderness, so as to test you by affliction, to know what was in your heart: to keep his commandments, or not. 3 He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, so you might know that it is not by bread alone that people live, but by all that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!