

The First Sunday of Lent
The First Temptations of Christ
March 10, 2019

In today's gospel, Luke provides us with Christ's temptation in the desert. Christ undergoes these temptations that we might see ourselves in Him. We have the chance to experience His temptations through Him – that we might learn. In every gospel reading we have an opportunity to learn about God and how we should live.

To truly appreciate Christ's temptation, we must first begin by understanding virtue. A virtue is a habitual behavior or disposition to choose what we believe is God's will for our life. The four cardinal virtues in Christian theology are prudence, courage, temperance and justice. We strengthen virtues by choosing to follow God and performing good and righteous actions. Christ shows his love for His Father by choosing God's will over Satan's offerings. This is what Adam failed to do in the Garden.

Prudence is being able to determine what you should do in a given scenario and the right time to take action. Courage is that inner strength and determination to endure fear or face unknown negative possibilities. It is that intestinal fortitude to withstand intimidation from whatever aggressive source may present a challenge. Temperance reflects self-control and moderation of the actions one might take. It make take the form of restraint, abstention, discretion, or over-reaction to an issue. Perhaps the most important of the cardinal virtues is justice. Justice suggests total fairness or righteousness.

We can experience temptation through all of our senses. Temptation may strive for our emotions by appearing to be good and thus being something we want. It may approach us through our intellect as we perceive something as attractive. Temptation may strike at our will by seeming to be desirable (i.e. "I have all I need, but I want more!") Satan's power of temptation need not come on like gang busters. Shock and awe are probably not the strategies the dark prince will employ. Rather, one might guess his tactics are more insidious and beguiling. Satan's intent is to entrap us through a slow, successive process that eventually ensnares us. We are caught up in sin before we realize what we have done.

If we consider that Christ's actions and words were always a lesson for us, we can make certain deductions about the forty days Christ spent in the desert. We also know Jesus was not one to waste time. And, we know His mission kept him on course to reach the goal set by God for our salvation. So, His time in the desert served a purpose and a lesson for us. What did He seek?

The desert provided a *quiet environment* for Christ. He was able to avoid the noise and clamor of everyday life. This setting provided an opportunity for inner peace where Jesus could clearly hear the voice of God. The lesson for us is to follow Jesus. Seek a quiet place to commune with God.

The desert was a place where Christ could be alone. *Solitude* can make way for inner peace.

Jesus fasted in the desert. Through fasting, He became more focused and attentive to hear the call of the Holy Spirit. Fasting for us can become like a training exercise. It can help us focus on resisting sin.

Christ also prayed and meditated in the desert. When we take the time and make the effort to seek a closer relationship with God through prayer and meditation, we empty more of ourselves and make more room for Him. We make room for His gift to each of us. We decrease that He might increase within us. We become more accepting of His love.

This is why our beloved Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta advised us: "Let nothing come between you & Jesus". Peace be with you.