

***The Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time***  
***September 26, 2021***  
***Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #37)***

*“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.  
And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.”*  
*(Matthew 4:1-2)*

Sacred Scripture records an event which took place directly after the Baptism of the Lord. The event is often referred to as Jesus’ Temptation in the Desert. Although this is neither a sacrament, a mystery of the rosary, or a station of the cross, it is nevertheless an extremely important moment in the life of Jesus. Reason dictates that this event, not witnessed by any later apostle or disciple, must have been conveyed to those same apostles and disciples at a later time by Jesus, Himself. This leads me to propose a question for our reflections over these next few weeks. Considering all of the other events which took place in the life of Christ which were also not witnessed by any of His followers, why was this moment so important the He had to tell them about what had happened and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the gospels writers chose to record the event in their gospels? Also, we must ask ourselves what this moment reveals to us concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus, temptation, and the Devil?

On June 7, 2019, an article was written and published by the Catholic News Agency. The article confirmed that the Vatican had approved the third edition of the Roman Missal; as prepared by the Italian bishops' conference. This new Italian edition would contain a peculiar translation concerning a certain statement in the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father). The statement (Latin - *ne nos inducas in tentationem*) which we understand as “lead us not into temptation” would now be translated as “do not abandon us to temptation”. Even though Pope Francis is approving of this change, the French translation had also made this change prior to the Italians, representatives from English speaking countries were hesitant to say if the same sort of change would be made to the Lord’s Prayer.

You may be thinking right now: “That’s an interesting bit of news, but what does that have to do with me?” Well, I find the “new” translation opens up a very serious question concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in both the life of Jesus and our own lives. Does the Holy Spirit lead us into areas where we could be tempted, as our English-speaking biblical translation indicates? Or, by praying for Him to “not abandon” us during temptations, could this one change lay open the possibility that we are expressing a real fear that He would actually choose to abandon us during temptation? Secondly,

this change could also potentially affect the way we understand the Holy Spirit's interactions in our daily lives. If He is leading, then that must mean we are following. And, if we are following then there is a great reassurance that He will not lead us into an area where the temptations we encounter will overcome us. Rather, He would, as our leader, encounter and conquer the enemy in front of us and choose to turn around and show us that the victory can be obtained, if we choose to do the same things He did first. Now, if I pray that He does not abandon me during a temptation, then has the Holy Spirit been leading or merely walking side by side with me during my life? Also, if I believe the Holy Spirit has the freedom to choose of which we also have, then by my begging Him not to abandon me, it must truly hold that, He can.

You have to be bored stiff at this moment, but please stay with me just a tad bit longer. Many greater minds than mine have concluded the whole reason why a translation can be made depends upon one Greek verb which does not properly translate into English. Yet, does this reasoning explain Genesis 22:1 which says: "After these things, God tempted Abraham . . ." The great Angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his masterpiece the *Summa Theologica*, would offer two points which I find helps. First, concerning temptations, we believe the fallen angels invite, incite, and allure men into sin through temptations. The Holy Spirit would not have done this to Jesus. Secondly, God allows or permits the assaults of the devils upon each of us. By allowing these to occur, He also provides us the much-needed grace to be victorious over these assaults. And, if we are open to Him, He can show us how these assaults may actually be used for our spiritual benefit. And how can God do all of this, by first being led Himself into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to begin reconciling mankind to His Father through the conquering of the assaults of the Devil which find their fullness in His victory upon the Cross.