

First Sunday of Lent A 2026

We have now entered the season of Lent, a very important season in which we prepare to celebrate the great feast of Easter – of the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord.

One aspect of our preparation is self-examination. Each one of us is a beloved son or daughter of God. The Father loves us dearly as he loved his Son, Jesus. His favour rests on us. But that does not mean we are perfect. No. Like Jesus in today's Gospel, at times we experience the temptation to evil. And, unlike Jesus, we sometimes give in to those temptations. God, our loving Father, will never abandon us, but he also pleads with us to turn away from sin, to repent, and come back to him with all our heart. During this holy season we are called to examine our lives to see where and how evil temptations may be present, and whether we are giving in to them.

There are two things to note about the temptations Jesus experienced in the wilderness that are relevant for us also.

Firstly, we note that they were not temptations to serious moral evil – to commit adultery, to murder, to steal, etc – no, they were far subtler than that. They were temptations to give priority to material comfort ('to turn stones into bread'), to have power over people (to rule all the kingdoms of the world) and to force the hand of God (to jump off the temple parapet so God would have to send his angels to save him).

So also with us: we may not be seriously tempted to kill someone, or to steal, or to lead immoral lives. But we can be tempted to look for an easy life, to try to manipulate others and even to force God's hand – 'If I do this sacrifice, God will have to answer my prayer.' We can easily fall prey to these temptations without even being aware of it. We need to examine closely our actions, our attitudes and our motivations.

Secondly, we should not think that Jesus experienced these temptations only while he was in the wilderness. No, he experienced them all throughout his life. What was significant about the wilderness experience is that it was there, in the wilderness, cut off from all the distractions of daily life, that he recognised their presence within him. So also with us. During Lent we try to cut ourselves off from some of the usual distractions of life, so that we can look at ourselves more closely and recognise any movements within us that are motivated not by the Spirit of God, but by the Evil One.

Today's Gospel assures us that the Evil One is defenceless against the Word of God. When we are tempted by the devil we should, like Jesus, utter some appropriate verse from the Bible. Say whatever verse comes to mind. Let us always remember that the devil has no answer to God's word. He may pester us often, but God's word is always a shield he cannot penetrate. And in our fight with our evil inclinations let us also take heart from the promise God makes to us in today's responsorial psalm, that he will always send his angels to protect us.

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