



## Matthew 4:1-11

**1** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, **3** and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' **4** But he replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' **5** The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. **6** 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for Scripture says: He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.' **7** Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.' **8** Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. **9** 'I will give you all these,' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' **10** Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.' **11** Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

Other readings: Genesis 2: 7-9, 3:1-7 Psalm 50 (51) Romans 5:12-19

The readings set before us for the Sundays of Lent are extraordinarily rich. On the first Sunday the gospel is always that of the temptations of Jesus, read from one of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). This year it is Matthew's account which is read.

Jesus, filled with the Spirit received at his baptism, is now led by the same Spirit to the place of encounter with the devil. He who was willing to undergo the baptism usually reserved for sinners now submits to the challenge of evil. He who showed solidarity with sinners now confronts the power of sin.

There is a profound mystery here. The sinless one, who comes to save sinners, is nevertheless tempted, for Jesus in his humanity has the same power of choice that we have. While we frequently succumb to the lure of evil, Jesus never does. Three distinct temptations invite him to abuse his miraculous powers for selfish ends (turning stones into bread), to manipulate his relationship with the Father (leaping from the temple parapet), and to collude with evil to gain dominion over the world (worshipping the devil).

Jesus confounds the devil on each occasion by quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy. The Scriptures urge us to pursue what is good and to worship the one, true God. The behaviour of Jesus in the gospel contrasts sharply with that of Adam and Eve in the reading from Genesis as they succumb to temptation. St Paul, writing to the Romans in the second reading, explains the effects of the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Jesus.

*From where does Jesus derive his strength in his battle with evil?*

*To what extent do the Scriptures inspire my decisions?*

*Pray for the courage to unmask the deceptive power of evil.*

*Pray for the wisdom to reject selfishness and the strength to confront evil.*

