

Journeying Together

First Week of Lent: Facing Temptations



OPENING RESPONSES

Reader: We gather in the name of the Father

**All: Who took the risk of creating humanity –
not as mindless robots
but as men and women and children
blessed with free wills
and the knowledge and capacity to choose between good and evil.**

Reader: We gather in the name of the Son

**All: Who took on the fullness of humanity
and found himself facing temptation as every human being does –
but showing his disciples and friends
the way to face it and to overcome it.**

Reader: We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit

**All: Who speaks to our hearts and minds
and prompts our choices for good
and strengthens and teaches us
how to avoid choices for ill.**

Reader: We gather...

**All: (*making the Sign of the Cross*) in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

GOSPEL READING – Mark 1: 12-15

Listen as the Gospel is read. It can help to close your eyes—or look at the person—or the image on the screen. Choose the one that suits you.

PERSONAL TIME WITH THE GOSPEL

For a few moments, reflect quietly on some questions. They do not have a right or wrong answer but are designed to help us to go more deeply into the Word of God.

- How do you think Jesus' time alone in the wilderness prepared him for working with disciples and crowds and individuals in his public ministry?
- Why do you think the Holy Spirit led Jesus out to face temptation and did not just reassure him that he was the Son of God and encourage him to get on with his ministry?

GROUP REFLECTION

- Why was it important that Jesus faced those temptations alone?
- How did the time in the wilderness help to strengthen Jesus – and prepare him for working with all the different people who would come his way during his ministry?
- What might have helped Jesus to be sure that the time was now right to take up his mission?

LISTENING TOGETHER

What happens in this Gospel helps us to learn how to “get real” about temptation in our own lives. Here are some thoughts to ponder – as you listen to them, make a note of which one strikes you as particularly challenging or helpful:

- It is the Holy Spirit who leads Jesus out into the wilderness to face temptation. Why?
- Jesus does not run away from temptation – or pretend it isn't happening – he faces it down.
- Jesus does not blame the Spirit – or anyone else for his temptations.
- Facing up to temptations in his own life (even as the Son of God) helped Jesus to understand what it is like for every man, woman and child in the human race.

- Knowing the reality of temptation to turn away from God, Jesus called people to repent – to turn away from those choices and to make positive choices for God.
- Taking time out on his own in the wilderness gave Jesus the space and time to take a long look at himself – his temptations – and God’s call for his life.
- Taking time out on his own in the wilderness and during his public ministry helped Jesus to give quality time and attention to other people.

Share Together:

- *What struck me about Jesus’ experience that I’ve never noticed before?*
- *Which thought about what Jesus learned challenged or helped me most?*

REFLECTION AND ACTION POINT FOR THE WEEK

This Lent, you are invited to keep a journal – a kind of accompaniment to your reflections. Each week, we will offer a few thoughts to get you started. Spend some time in personal reflection on the thoughts below. Try not to judge yourself but be honest and humble in just being human.

- What are my “favourite” temptations – the things that just won’t go away?
- How do I react to temptations? Running away? Denying I have them? Being ashamed of admitting them? Feel guilty of having them? Fighting – fighting – fighting – but convinced I will lose in the end?

For next week – choose something from your reflections that is manageable – maybe even a little amusing – to share with your group. Remember this will be in complete confidence but do not use it for a deep or difficult conversation.

CLOSING PRAYER

The psalms are real prayers. They have stood the test of time because they speak to the reality of human life. Below is the psalm for this Sunday. We will use it today but also think about using it during your own prayer and journal times during the week.

All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

Reader: Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour.

All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

Reader: Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.
In your love remember me.
because of your goodness, O Lord.

All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

Reader: The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who stray,
He guides the humble in the right path,
He teaches his way to the poor.

All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

Amen