

# TRINITY NEWS

## First Sunday in Lent Ungodly Temptation and Godly Testing

“Then Jesus was led up by the spirit in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”. What does it mean to be “led up by the spirit?” Does it mean a suspension of our will, the suppression of getting our own way, at least for a time? But wasn’t Jesus in tune with the will of the Father? Why did he need to be tested? The pious answer might be that he deigned to be tested because he was prepared to enter the human condition fully, without reservation. Rather like Matthew’s version of the baptism of Jesus when the Baptizer says, “I need to be baptised by you, and you come to me?” We are both tempted and tested. We are tempted by many things, including evil. Oscar Wilde said that “I can resist anything but temptation.” Being tempted is more far more attractive than being tested! After all, it is God who ultimately tests us.

Somehow it was important for Jesus to resist the temptations placed before him by the Shadow Dancer known as the Devil. The temptations in Matthew and Luke’s form are threefold:

1. **The temptation to expediency**, to turn desert stones into the aroma and crunchy taste of well-baked bread. This is a test of his trust in God. He was already hungry and weak from a long fast. But he puts his trust in the words of Scripture, the recorded literary voice of God that he had heard audibly during his baptism at the Jordan. Christ replies: “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

2. **The temptation to be a star** and to desert God for false deities. Being a star may lead to false expectations and the neglect of all that has been dear to us. The devil is tempting with all the persuasive powers of supernatural darkness, but the test of God is primary for Jesus. The devil quotes Scripture about divine intervention, but Jesus quotes a text that shows his awareness that the real test comes from God: “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

3. The third temptation is perhaps the most seductive all, the temptation of power. This means that Jesus would have to prostrate himself before the evil one, to get access to such power. But “all the kingdoms of the world” do not entrance Jesus. He consistently bypassed all pretensions to power and riches. He saw the temporary status of power and its emptiness.. “Worship the Lord your God and serve only him,” is the response of Jesus. The temptations of Jesus and the tests of God are finished in the desert, but they will come again, as they always do.

Jesus faced his demons in the desert. Our demons have many faces and a multiplicity of challenges. But God asks us to trust in the divine providence and the words of life that have been given to us. We have a reluctance to put God to the test because that would leave the heart of our will out of the equation. The worship of God and the service of God are integral to our Christian pilgrimage. Anselm said that God was a Being of whom nothing greater could be proposed. The Shadow Dancer comes out of the darkness sometimes to tempt us. But God is always there to remind us of what we cannot let go if we wish to remain true to our calling. The self-discipline of such a vocation is more powerful than adherence to all the rules in the world. Besides, the rules are unbending, and we do bend, and fall, and then the Lord God looks into our hearts and tells us of many little tests that we have already passed. The Divine Encourager comes to lift us up.

**Bishop Arthur Jones**

**Your prayers are asked in our healing ministry for** Diana Croyston, JPeter, Beryl Tanner, Douglas Tanner, Fidelia Matthews, Carrie Angus, Gloria Domingo, Fr. Barry Cumberland, Marian Kermanshahchi, Rosaline Soulsby, Gitte Volk, Robert Go, Marie Cheung, Hajie Agustin, Eufrocena Quiapos, Emilie Nauntofte, Ron Jacob, Jovel Llagas, Ema Duhaylongsod, Lenlen Cabili, Zeny dela Cruz, Josephine Maraño, Binnie Gooding, Ted Whale.

**TO PLAN:**

March 15, Tuesday.

- Bible Study, 10am
- The Lenten Study, 7:15pm @ the Tutton's (#3 Sta. Potenciana St., Urdaneta Village)

**Next week's readings:**

Genesis 12:1-8; Psalm 33;  
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17;  
John 3:1-17