

## First Sunday of Lent

Year B

Gn 9:8-15  
Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
I Pt 3:18-22  
Mk 1:12-15

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No sooner was the glory of the hour of the Baptism over than there came the battle of the temptations. It was the Spirit who thrust Jesus out into the wilderness for the testing time. The very Spirit who came upon him at his Baptism now drove him out for the test.

### I. The Term -Temptations

1. They are not sent to us to make us fall; they are sent to strengthen our nerve.
2. They are not meant for our ruin but for our good.
3. They are meant to be tests from which we emerge better warriors of God.

Forty days is a phrase which is not to be taken literally. It is noteworthy that the number 40 is itself often viewed as sacred.

1. Forty is the number of the days of the flood.
2. Forty was the number of years of the Israelites wandering.
3. Forty was the number of days grace given to Nineveh by Jonas.
4. Forty was the number of days of the fast of the prophet Elias.
5. Forty was the number of days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai.
6. Forty was the number of days Jesus fasted in the desert.
7. Just as we use the phrase "10 days or so"-so the Hebrews also used the term "40 days"- not literally but to denote a fair length of time.

### II. The Title

It was Satan who tempted Jesus. The development of the conception of Satan is very interesting.

The word "Satan" in Hebrew simply means an adversary and in the Old Testament it is so used of ordinary human adversaries and opponents again and again.

The other title of Satan is the "Devil". The word Devil comes from the Greek diabolos, which literally means a slanderer.

1. Here we have the whole essence of the Temptation story.
2. God was saying to him, "Conquer them by this unconquerable love even if you finish up on a cross.
3. Satan was saying to Jesus, "Use your power to blast men, obliterate your enemies, win the world by might, power and bloodshed."
4. God said to Jesus, "Set up a reign of love."
5. Satan said to Jesus, Set up a dictatorship of force."

7. Jesus had to choose between the way of God and the way of Satan. So he went into the desert to be tempted by the devil. The essence of the demonic from the biblical 'point of view is an utter contempt for the cross.

When Peter said we don't want a cross, sacrifice, discipline, Christ called him Satan. Because that is exactly what Satan did at the beginning of his public life, even to the end. Come down and believe.

1. We must always remember that again and again we are tempted through our gifts.
2. The person who is gifted with charm will be tempted to use that charm "to get away with anything."
3. The person who is gifted with the power of words will be tempted to use his command of words to produce glib excuses to justify his own conduct.
4. The person with a vivid and sensitive imagination will undergo agonies of temptations of passions that a more stolid person will never experience.
5. The person with great gifts of mind will be tempted to use these gifts for himself and not for others, to become the master and not the servant of men.
6. It is the grim fact of temptation that it is just where we are strongest that we must be in forever on the watch.

### **III. The Test**

We too could join the crowds and say to Christ, "Cast yourself down." Highlight of the 2nd temptation.

"Cast yourself down." Be like those sensible people who spend their lives as grifters, cutting corners, double dealing. So drop down and join the crowd, move with the mob. Slide with the smooth, sophisticated, slick broad avenue of sin.

1. Cast yourself down! Be modern. Go for the gin and sin. Don't let religion get in the way. Half of America never goes to church anyway.

2. Cast yourself down! If you are weary of your marriage, turn in your present partner for a new streamlined model.

3. Cast yourself down! Be downcast, dejected and depressed. Give up hope!!! Discouragement, not the devil, leads most people to grave sin. In this sense, to be downcast or cast down might mean to be cast away.

4. Cast yourself down! Come down from your high horse. Why are you so different? And if they come down they become cheap, common and rate about as high as yesterday's soiled newspaper for then you are just one of the crowd.

5. Cast yourself down! Like the gamblers of Calvary who shook the dice for the garments of God and live a life of self-indulgence, apathy and indifference as though there never was a crib at Bethlehem or a cross at Calvary or a God in Heaven. God's justice is just as infinite as his mercy.

6. Cast yourself down! Take the plunge. Let yourself go. Be modern so there will be...  
No commandments to cramp your style.  
No church to block your wishes.  
No confessions to color your conscience.  
Forget the Christ and follow the crowd.

We all need the courage of Columbus who never turned back, and discovered a continent. The continent we have to conquer is our own self.

But if we are neither downcast through discouragement nor do the devil's wish to "Cast yourself down" by lowering our standards, we shall find that God's angels will bear us up higher than the pinnacle of the temple -- even as high as the heights of heaven.

How do we know? Well, Christ was there before us. Then and only then can we tell the devil to go...well, you know!