

Third Sunday of Lent Year A

St. Isidore Catholic Church, Danville

Temptation: Testing; Training.

"The truth is like the light to sore eyes. He who never offended (confronted) anyone, never did anyone any good."¹ Diogenes

Each Sunday of Lent we find someone or some group of believers being confronted.

In today's Gospel, Jesus confronted the woman at the well and changed her life.

So, for us, Lent is a time for being confronted, being trained, being tested. "Without a test, we have no testimony!"

During this year's Parish Mission, we will look at temptations and opposition in our lives. We might be surprised by the benefits we can gain from both temptations and opposition.

William Barclay, a Scot author and minister wrote:

"In our reflection of the temptations of Jesus, we need to understand the meaning of Greek word to tempt "PEIRAZEIN" (Greek #3985).

In English, the word "tempt" has a bad connotation:

- **to try to entice us to do wrong;**
- **to try to seduce us into sin,**
- **to try to persuade us to take the wrong way.**

But “PEIRAZEIN” has a quite different element in its meaning. It means **to test far more than it means to tempt** in our sense of the word.

So, with this understanding, what we call “**temptation**”

- **is not meant to make us sin;** it is meant to enable us to conquer sin.
- **is not meant to make us bad,** it is meant to make us good.
- **is not meant to weaken us,** it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal.

According to William Barclay, in the bible, God **tests** people **that** He has especially chosen for a special mission.

God tested **Abraham when He asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac**. In the Gospel, **God the Father is preparing, testing and training His Son for what lay ahead of Him**.

Therefore, the context of these temptations is so important.

After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the **heavens were opened for him,** and **he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him.** And **a voice came from the heavens, saying,** “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:13–17

So, the identity of Jesus is well established. Now is the time of the final preparation! Jesus is now led to the desert by the Spirit to be tested by the devil.

I think that it is worth noting that it was only after this encounter in the desert, that Jesus was attended to by angels. It would appear that no one was with him during the struggle.

Therefore, two things emerge that I find interesting:

- 1. Jesus had to face his personal temptations alone, at least physically alone.**
- 2. Jesus himself must have shared the details with his disciples, (in his own words “his friends”) telling them of his own spiritual struggle.**

“We must always approach this story with a unique and special reverence, for in it Jesus is laying bare his inmost heart and soul. He is telling ...what he went through. It is the most sacred of all stories, for in it Jesus is saying to us that he can help others who are tempted because he himself was tempted.” William Barclay

Another thing worth noting is that “He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.” Then the tempter approached him.

He was tempted, when physically he should be at his lowest, but remember that Jesus has been alone in prayer for those forty days and therefore He can say with conviction, with spiritual strength:

**“One does not live on bread alone,
but on every Word, that comes forth
from the mouth of God.”**

In the Scriptures, being tested does not necessarily mean that the person is a sinner. So, if you are tempted, then you are worth tempting because you may be about to be called to do something very important.

Immediately after the temptations in the desert **Jesus returned to Capernaum and He began his public ministry.**

Just like Jesus, we too are being invited by the Spirit to go into the desert, or to climb the mountain or to come to the well this lent

Lent can be an opportunity to review our lives again.

We may have to get a few things in our lives straightened out before we continue our journey, our ministry.

When Jesus went into the desert for forty days and nights, he is teaching us an important lesson - the need for and the power of personal prayer and reflection alone with our God

Watchman Nee, a Chinese Christian author and teacher explains the power of prayer like this: **"Our prayers lay the track down on which God's power can come. Like a train, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails."**

That should be our goal this Lent: to lay down the rails or repair our tracks or rails on which God's power can come.

A good way to start is with this week's Parish Mission

Monday: **The Three Temptations Faced by Jesus in the Desert**

What was at the heart of each temptation? What was so wrong with them?

Tuesday: **Jesus was led by the Spirit**

The context of the temptations of Jesus

The Spiritual Journey of Jesus: Our Spiritual Journey Too

Wednesday: **Jesus Gives Sight to a Man Who Never Had Sight**

To Whom is this Miracle Directed?

Can Opposition Open Our Spiritual Eyes?

Thursday: **The Blind Man's Spiritual Awakening**

What We Can Learn from It?

- **Monday through Thursday:**

8:10 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. (repeat of morning)

- **One hour to 65 minutes**
- **Confessions - bad memory – anyone carrying a burden**
- **All welcome: this parish, any parish, no parish**

¹ Diogenes, a Greek philosopher 412 – 323 BC