

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.

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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – Matthew 4:1-11 – Roman Missal – Cycle A**

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.” He said in reply, “It is written: *One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*” Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*” Jesus answered him, “Again it is written, *You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*” Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.” At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is written: *The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.*” Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

## **Spiritual Reading From Saint Augustine**

We have heard in the gospel how the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Certainly Christ was tempted by the devil. In Christ you were tempted, for Christ received his flesh from your nature, but by his own power gained life for you; he suffered insults in your nature, but by his own power gained glory for you; therefore, he suffered temptation in your nature, but by his own power gained victory for you. If in Christ we have been tempted, in him we overcame the devil. Do you think only of Christ’s temptations and fail to think of his victory? See yourself as tempted in him, and see yourself as victorious in him. He could have kept the devil from himself; but if he were not tempted he could not teach you how to triumph over temptation.

## **Temptation - Lesson and Discussion** “*tempted by the devil*”

**What is temptation?** Temptation is “the solicitation to sin, whether by persuasion or offering some pleasure. It may arise from the world, the flesh, or the devil.”[1] The very basic temptations derive not from the Devil himself, but our own evil concupiscence and inclination to sin

which adhere to us through original sin (Jas 1:14), on account of which it is said that the flesh lusts against the spirit (Gal. 5:17).[2] That being said however, the Devil does indeed tempt all of us at some point in our lives. This is why Satan is called the tempter in today's Gospel.

**How does the devil tempt us to sin?** He does it in a two fold manner: First, he looks to incite our desires and pleasure to sin (our concupiscence), and then looks to confuse us and blind us from the truth. He also tempts bad people to persecute us, or to try us by their wicked vanities, as he did by the friends of Job.[3]

**Can the devil force us to sin?** No. As St. Augustine wrote, "for as a chained dog can bite none but those who go near him, so the devil cannot harm with his temptations those who do not consent to them. Like the dog he can bark at you, but cannot bite you against your will." For us, we should never consent into conversation with the Devil. We see how it played out for our first parents in the first reading for today. They were blinded and lied to of the fruit from the tree of knowledge. We may feel the heat of Satan's breath on the back of our necks sometimes, but he can not touch a hair on our head if we don't allow him. We see in the garden a pattern that Satan takes. He enters in unnoticed (more subtle than any other creature), begins a conversation (Did God say you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?), plants the seed of doubt through a lie (You will not die) and makes something bad look good (when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God). We cannot let Satan get a stronghold but rather not let him enter into our lives and not let hold a conversation with him. "We must watch, especially in the beginning of temptation, for then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind, but is withstood upon the threshold the very moment he knocks...When ills have gathered strength, by long delay, first there comes from the mind a simple thought; then a strong imagination, afterwards delight, and the evil motion and consent and so, little by little the fiend does gain entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning." [4]

**Why did Jesus allow himself be tempted then?** Jesus allowed the temptations so as to give us an example of humility, and to teach us to overcome the temptations that we are going to have to undergo in the course of our lives.[5] Jesus amerces himself in all things human, including being tempted by the devil, to be the perfect example. "As Our Lord did everything for our instruction so he wished to be led out into the wilderness and they're to enter into combat with the devil. He did this in order that the baptized should not be troubled if after Baptism they suffer still greater temptations, as though such were not to be expected." [6] The temptation of Christ is placed on the first Sunday of Lent and is our invitation to go into battle with Our Lord against Satan. During Lent especially, the Church is an "immense army, fighting day and night against their spiritual enemies. We remember how, on Ash Wednesday, the Church calls Lent a Christian warfare. In order that we may have newness of life, which will make us worthy to sing once more

our Alleluia, we must conquer our three enemies: the devil, the flesh, and the world. We are fellow combatants with our Jesus, for He, too, submits to the triple temptation, suggested to Him by Satan in person." [7]

**What is the triple temptation in the Life of Christ? What is the triple temptation is our life?** In today's Gospel we witness the victory of Christ over Satan, a victory we can share in. It is a victory over that which is in the world which Saint John writes about. "For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world." [8].

Sensual lust is conquered in the first temptation as Christ refuses to satisfying self, bring himself pleasure, in turning rock to bread. Enticement for the eyes is conquered in the third temptation as Christ is shown all that is "of the world" and is offered everything, but says no. A prideful life is conquered in the second temptation as Christ is tempted to make a spectacle of himself by throwing himself from the temple and being saved by the angels.

**Give examples of the temptations of pleasure (sensual lust), worldly goods (enticement for the eyes) and prideful life in our life?**

Each day at Prime (prayed between 9am and Noon) the following prayer is prayed from the Officium Divinum. "Now that the sun has risen, let us as suppliants ask of God that in today's acts he preserve us from all that may hurt us. May He check and restrain our tongue so that it be not an instrument of discord and strife. May He screen and protect our eyes so that they do not drink in vanities. May our inmost soul be pure and the folly of impurity find in us no place; may moderation in food and drink wear down the body's pride."

Jesus allowed himself to be tempted was to fix what Adam and Eve had broken. As we read in today's first reading, Adam and Eve were in paradise, but were tricked by the serpent. Thus, they were sent out into the desert. Jesus heads back out into that desert to be tempted, but not given in to the temptations. "Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation...Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father." [9] "St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and St. Gregory the Great, make the remark, that the commandment put upon our first parents in the earthly paradise was one of abstinence; and that it was by their not exercising this virtue, that they brought every kind of evil upon themselves and upon their children." [10] Adam and Eve were able to eat of any fruit but were commanded to abstain from the tree in the middle of the garden. In their unwillingness to deprive themselves of the tree, they deprived themselves of God. Adam and Eve said no to abstinence. Jesus says yes to a voluntary abstinence for forty days and nights.