

**“One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”** [Matthew 4:4]

**A. GENESIS 9:8-15-- The Context:** This book covers events in prehistory and from 1800 B.C. to 1300 B.C. It was written to make the point that God created everything and that it was good, yet humans broke faith with God and brought evil into the world. [RG 32] **Today's text** speaks of **God's everlasting covenant with Noah** and his sons never to destroy the earth by flood. [TCB, 12]

**B. PSALM 25:4-9 --The Context.** A lament. The psalmist mixes ardent pleas with expressions of **confidence in God who forgives and guides.** [TCB, 661]

**C. I PETER 3:18-22---The Context:** This book is attributed to the apostle Peter who urges first Christians to **pattern their lives according to the message of the crucified Messiah.** [RG 469] **In today's text** emphasizes that by his suffering and death, Christ saved the unrighteous, which he communicates to believers through the baptismal bath that cleanses their consciences from sin. **As Noah's family was saved through water, so Christians are saved through the waters of baptism.** [RG 379]

**D. MARK 1:12-15--The Context:** Mark was a Gentile disciple of Peter writing for Gentiles circa 65-70 A.D. This is the shortest gospel, filled with more vivid detail than the other Synoptics. He focuses more on what Jesus did than what he said. [RG 364] **Today's pericope** asserts that the same Spirit that descended on Jesus at his baptism now drives him into the desert and confrontation with Satan who tries to frustrate the work of God. Then **in the plan of God, Jesus was not to proclaim the good news of salvation** prior to the termination of the Baptist's active mission. [TCB, 69]

## WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME PERSONALLY TODAY?

We are now into the great season of Lent, when we spend six weeks preparing to celebrate the high point of our faith: **the Paschal Mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of the Incarnate God.** Formerly it was a time of severe penance as a way of **purifying ourselves from our sinful habits and being ready to celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ** with a renewed commitment to follow him.

Even though we are no longer asked by the Church to observe the severe penances of former times, it is surely fitting that we make some form of preparation. It should be **a time for personal reflection** on where we stand as Christians. Only a little reflection will convince us that, on the one hand, **there are many ways in which we fail through word and action, through our thoughts and through our failure to be the kind of people that the Gospel challenges us to be.**

But our reflections should not only focus on the negative.

- **What are the positive things which should be part and parcel of my daily life?**
- **What kind of a person am I** in relation to my family, friends, working colleagues and other people with whom I come in contact?
- **How active am I as a member of my Christian community e.g. my parish?**
- **What difference do I make to other people's lives?**
- **What do I do, within my limitations, to help eradicate the abuses which are part of our society?**

**These are just some of the questions I can ask myself during these six weeks.** And it is never too late to get started. Let us not rigidly think that, because Ash Wednesday has

# LENT: THE CALL TO REPENT AND DRAW CLOSER TO GOD & OTHERS

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already come and gone, that I cannot start today. Remember that even those who came to the vineyard at the eleventh hour were paid the same amount. But the earlier I start the better.

**SOME OF THE POSITIVE THINGS I CAN DO ARE: (1) Celebrating the Eucharist each day** or at least on a few days in the week. **(2) Setting aside some part of my day for personal prayer. (3) Reflecting on Scripture**, alone or, better still, with others. The Scripture readings for each day in Lent provide excellent material. **(4) Setting aside some money that I might otherwise spend on myself** for a meal, entertainment or clothes and giving it to an organization which takes care of the less fortunate in our society. **(5) Similarly, if I decide to abstain from smoking or alcohol, contribute that money to a worthy charitable cause**

After his baptism, Jesus goes to the desert for forty days. And, during that time, he is tested by the Evil One. Mark does not say how, but Matthew and Luke do. **These tests are really examples of the kind of tests that Jesus was to face in the course of his public life.** The meaning and symbolism of the passage is to be focused on, rather than its historical accuracy. Its purpose is **to help us to understand the conflicts that were in Jesus' own life** and which will also be found in ours too. [Frank Doyle, SJ]

Henri Nouwen in his essay on Jesus' temptations describes Jesus' **first temptation** to turn stones into bread as **a temptation to be relevant**, to do something that is needed so that you can be appreciated by people. The **second temptation** to throw himself from the temple was **to be spectacular and to become popular**. The **third temptation** to rule the world was **to exert power over other people**. We are often tempted by these sorts of tendencies: (1) seeking the appreciation of others for good deeds to them; (2) popularity and competitiveness; (3) exerting power over others.

Our answers to each of these tendencies during Lent can be: (1) **daily prayer**—listening to the voice of God's love and **his call for humble service** remembering that each inspiration to do a good work for others is a grace from the Holy Spirit; (2) **seeking forgiveness and reconciliation** from others and (3) **abandoning power over others in favor of love**. [Henri Nouwen]

## WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

What positive habits do I want to make part of my life starting during Lent?	What kind of Christian example am I to my family, co-workers, and friends?	How will I become more active as a member of my Christian community, my parish?	What will I begin to do during Lent to help eradicate abuses in our society?
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**[Sources:** *Scripture readings- The Catholic Bible, NAB translation, Home Study Edition, (TCB), and its Reading Guide (RG); The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, (NJBC) 1990 edition; J.L.McKenzie, SJ, Dictionary of the Bible (DB); Wm Barclay, The Daily Bible Study Series, Gospel of Mark [DBSS]; Sunday Scripture Reflections* by Frank Doyle, SJ at [www.sacredspace.ie/livingspace](http://www.sacredspace.ie/livingspace).; Henri Nouwen, *The Temptations of Jesus*. [Editor: Michael Hosemann].