



ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENTEN ACTIVITIES

“Jesus’ temptations

The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him.²⁴¹ At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him ‘until an opportune time.’²⁴²

The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel’s vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God’s Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil’s conqueror: he ‘binds the strong man’ to take back his plunder.²⁴³ 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.

Jesus’ temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him.²⁴⁴ This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: ‘For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning.’²⁴⁵ By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 538-540*

²⁴¹ Cf. *Mk* 1:12-13.

²⁴² *Lk* 4:13.

²⁴³ Cf. *Ps* 95:10; *Mk* 3:27.

²⁴⁴ Cf. *Mt* 16:21-23.

²⁴⁵ *Heb* 4:15.

Catholics who are 18 and older, until their 59th birthday, are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Only one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to one’s need; but, together, they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids are allowed. All who have reached their 14th birthday are to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays during Lent. Also, Catholics of all ages are urged to prepare their hearts for Easter by additional prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.