

Mark, in his typically hurried pace, does not tell us of the temptations offered to Jesus by Satan. Perhaps these were already known to the community for which he wrote his account, and it seemed unnecessary to lay them out again. Perhaps it is enough to know that Jesus was tempted and overcame those temptations. I do not really know why the particular temptations are not mentioned, but maybe it is because the temptations offered to Jesus were specific to Him and not to us.

There are merits and pitfalls in each of these suspicions, and perhaps it is good we do not have a definitive answer. It leaves more room for our own contemplations, our own prayers.

Luke gives us a more detailed accounting of the temptations, turn these stones into bread, jump off this temple, worship me and you will have the world.

What these temptations show us is that more than one thing can be true at once; that the temptations were specific to Our Lord and that certain temptations specific to ourselves, and the remedy is to be solid and steadfast in our faith.

Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, wrote in his book: *The Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ Reduced to Practice*):

“Yet the Lord sometimes permits that souls, which are dear to him, should be tempted, with some violence, in order that they may better understand their own weaknesses , and the necessity of grace to prevent them from falling. God permits us to be tempted, that we may be more detached from the things of earth and conceive a more ardent desire to behold him in heaven. God also permits us to be tempted, in order to increase our merits. When it is disturbed by temptation, and sees itself in danger of committing sin, the soul has recourse to the Lord, It renews its determination to die rather than offend God: it humbles itself and takes refuge in the arms of Divine Mercy. By this means, as it is proved by experience, it acquires more strength and is united more closely to God”.

In other words, **God allows us to be tempted so that we might allow Him to be a Father to us.**

That is one of the great benefits of this season of Lent. The disciplines of prayer, fasting and alms giving are not meant to be burdens, but rather they **offer opportunities** to rely on God and not ourselves.

Here is what I am getting at from a very personal perspective:

Over the last six months, my prayer life has been in the dumps. Both frequency and fervency of my prayer is suffering. When I pray, it seems dry and impersonal, and so there are days that I might go without praying at all.

This is not the first time this has happened to me, and it probably will not be the last, but I am counting on the grace of this season to return to regular prayer, even if it might remain, for a while, dry or unfulfilling in the moment.

Four (5) days in and I have already had two failures. This only reinforces my understanding that I need to rely on God for the help I need, because if I rely on myself, I am too weak or too lazy, probably a bit of each.

Accepting this means that I am already heading down the right path, but even here I need to be careful not to think the successes are all my doing.

I gave a personal testimony because I am convinced, I am not alone in this struggle. We all sin and fall short of the Glory of God. That is not in question, but the question is: Do I (we). desire to do better or are we going to continue to stray down the path of least resistance?

Lent is the opportunity given us every year to look into ourselves to see where our weaknesses lie and ask ourselves the tough questions and then seek God's assistance in that area.

Lent is the traditional time of personal asceticism, that is self inflicted hardships and the preparation for Easter and the renewal of our Baptismal Promises. Lent is forever linked with Easter.

Lent is always oriented to the Resurrection and the Resurrection to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not only personal, but we also call it Communion for good reason.

We receive communion as a community of believers. We gather. We stand together, we walk together, we kneel together. We pray together. We believe... together.

Lent is not meant to be a lonely journey, but rather one traveled together.

So, let us embrace this Lent. Let our cooperation in this holy season bring us closer to God and to one another.