



## First Sunday of Lent February 17, 2013 C

- **Temptations**
- **Three Daily Dusty Pink Sinners!**

The following reflection on temptation was written by Fr. Boyer.

*All of us have experienced temptation. We are tempted to eat that extra piece of pie. Or, we're tempted not to tell the clerk that she didn't charge enough for the ground beef. Or maybe we've been tempted to leave the parking lot after a little fender-bender.*

*Luke aptly summarizes these experiences when he finishes narrating the story of Jesus' temptations: "When the devil had finished all this tempting he left him to await another opportunity."*

*Notice that last phrase: "To await another opportunity." We can never say, "Now that I've been tempted, that temptation will never come my way again." It will be back. And if we get away with something, we really want to try it again.*

*Temptation is a part of Christian life. The key is to be able to recognize it, unmask it, and strip it of its false promises. This is really rather easy because the devil is not creative? That's right, the devil is not creative.*

*Temptation usually takes one of three forms, as the Bible tells us over and over again.*

1. **Hunger** is one of the devil's favorite temptations. Remember Adam and Eve? They were hungry. They saw that the food on the tree of good and bad was pleasing to the eyes. So they ate it.

*The Israelites wondered in the desert for 40 years. They were hungry, and gave in to the temptation to grumble against God.*

*When was the last time we were tempted by hunger to over-eat or to drink too much? And, if we add our hunger for companionship, our hunger for success, and a hunger for reward, we see how old and common this temptation really is.*

2. Another common temptation is called **false worship**. Like hunger, it occurs throughout the Bible.

*More than once the Israelites gave up on the god who had freed them from Egyptian slavery and worshipped the false gods of the people with whom they came in contact.*

*Nor is false worship a thing of the past. Those in banking and accounting often worship money. Power over others is sought after and worshiped in families, in religious congregations, and in business. Mix in our desire for food that is instant, apparel that is the latest fashion, and cars and computers that are the newest or best, and we see that false worship is very much alive and well.*

3. The third common temptation is the **test of trust**. In the garden, Adam and Eve tested God. They wanted to be wise like God. In the desert, the Israelites tested God—they wanted food and water, and some wanted to return to Egypt.

*How do we test God?*

*When we bargain with God in prayer, or proclaim that a God of love wouldn't let people suffer, or declare that God wills death, destruction, and disease. Such temptations have been around a long time.*

*In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as one man who did not succumb to temptations. Jesus is told that the promises which God has made in the Scriptures apply to everyone at any time and in any place regardless of the circumstances. All a person needs to do is lay claim to the promises. This is why the devil quotes the Bible—an important point to note for those of us who have never read it!*

*Jesus refuses to claim the promises. Jesus demonstrates that the temptation to satisfy hunger, false worship, and to test trust can be resisted. Jesus also knows what the Bible says!*

*To hunger for the word of God, to worship only the real God, and to trust God—these are the characteristics of the followers of Jesus.*

*Luke makes it perfectly clear that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit after His baptism in the Jordan and that He was led by the Spirit into the desert for 40 days, where He was tempted.*

*According to Luke, the Spirit enabled Jesus to resist the devil's temptations, to be victorious.*

*In Baptism and Confirmation we are given the gift of the Spirit, so that we, like Jesus, can recognize the temptations in our lives and claim victory.*

*During the 40 days of Lent we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil or on Easter*

*Sunday, when we will proclaim victory. Lent is our time to recognize those old forms of temptations. As we resist, we are transformed, and we travel forward as true followers of Jesus.*

*This is why we need Lent—to recognize those common temptations and to prepare to renew those baptismal promises of victory.*

*Do you remember your first baptismal promises?*

Be ready Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday to shout out: “I do!” “I do!”

### **Daily dusty pink sinners**

In our first reading today, we hear how Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig leaves after they realized that they had disobeyed God’s command not to eat fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden. Commenting on the fig leaf image, Scripture scholar Patricia Sanchez writes:

*What fig leaves are you hiding behind in your life, or I in mine? What are those things that we must change or surrender in order to be clothed again with the white garment of renewed baptismal grace at Easter? Perhaps it is an inordinate pride that keeps us hiding from God or an unwillingness to depend on God in all things. Perhaps it is a failure to pray as we should, to think before we speak or to leave unsaid those words that hurt more than physical blows. To aid our reflection in this regard, William J. Bausch (A World of Stories for Preachers and Teachers, Twenty-third Publications, Mystic, CT: 1998) suggests that we think of ourselves not necessarily as biblical scarlet sinners but as the daily, dusty pink ones, who should have visited our parents more often but didn’t; who were afraid, for whatever reasons, to reach out and hug the people we should have but didn’t. There’s a whole litany of these dust particles that keep us hiding behind fig leaves:*

- \_\_\_ *the words of love we couldn’t bring ourselves to say.*
- \_\_\_ *the comfort suppressed.*
- \_\_\_ *the friendships left to wither.*
- \_\_\_ *relationships unattended.*
- \_\_\_ *children neglected as we pursued the better life... for them, of course.*
- \_\_\_ *the moral lapses.*
- \_\_\_ *the little lies, the face-saving untruths.*
- \_\_\_ *the off-color or ethnic jokes to let everyone know how regular a gal or guy we are.*
- \_\_\_ *the suppression of really revealing our spiritual yearnings, our terrible hunger for God, for meaning, for love.*

*Together today, and through all of Lent, we ask your forgiveness, Lord:*

- \_\_\_ *for my own self-pity.*
- \_\_\_ *for my Luke warmth.*
- \_\_\_ *for my times of despair and distrust.*
- \_\_\_ *for my refusals to be hugged.*
- \_\_\_ *for my disbelief in your love.*
- \_\_\_ *for my searchings everywhere but in your heart.*
- \_\_\_ *for apologies frozen on my lips.*
- \_\_\_ *for my words of love unspoken.*
- \_\_\_ *for my kisses and embraces ungiven.*
- \_\_\_ *for compliments never offered.*
- \_\_\_ *for a heart closed in self-absorption.*
- \_\_\_ *for my own unwillingness to forgive.*
- \_\_\_ *for not believing in your forgiveness.*

*Help me, merciful and loving God, to rely on you and to divest myself of the fig leaves, faults and failures that keep me from becoming a truer image of you. Amen.*

### **Wisdom from the saints on spiritual discernment**

In today’s Gospel, Jesus is tempted by the devil. In the following quotes, seven saints speak about the workings of the devil.

*The evil spirit often disguises himself as an angel of light, and now and then tricks us by his illusions. All of us must be ever alert for these tricks and should pay particular attention to learning how to recognize and overcome them.*

—St. Vincent de Paul

*You need great discrimination in order to distinguish between good and evil. So do not readily or lightly put your trust in appearances, but weigh things well, and after testing everything carefully, cleave to what is good and reject what is evil. You must test and discriminate before you give credence to anything.*

—St. Gregory of Sinai

*However great may be the temptation, if we know how to use the weapon of prayer well, we shall come off conquerors at last, for prayer is more powerful than all the devils. He who is attacked by the spirits of darkness needs only to apply himself vigorously to prayer, and he will beat them back with great success.*

—St. Bernard of Clairvaux

*The devil’s snare does not catch you unless you are already nibbling on the devil’s bait.*

—St. Ambrose

*The soul possesses freedom; and though the Devil can make suggestions, he does not have the power to compel you against your will.*

—St. Cyril of Jerusalem

*The strategy of our adversary can be compared to the tactics of a commander intent upon seizing and plundering a position he desires. The leader of an army will encamp, explore the fortifications and defenses of the fortress, and attack at the weakest point. In the same way, the adversary of our human nature examines from every side all our virtues: theological, cardinal, and moral. Wherever he discovers the defenses of eternal salvation to be the weakest and most lacking, there he attacks and tries to take us by storm.*

–St. Ignatius of Loyola

*Let the enemy rage at the gate, let him knock, let him push, let him cry, let him howl, let him do worse; we know for certain that he cannot enter except by the door of our consent.*

–St. Francis de Sales

Have a blessed week,

*Fr. Saron*