

# The Temptation of Jesus

The example of Jesus in the desert for forty days – a time during which he fasted and prayed – is imitated in the Church during the period of Lent, which starts on 26 February. It is a time when we too are challenged to a spiritual spring-clean. Traditionally, on the first Sunday of Lent, we face up to our inner demons.

According to the Bible Narrative, Jesus comes to the desert fresh from his own Baptism, newly affirmed as 'God's beloved Son.' He seeks space and guidance for his mission ahead and is confronted by the temptation to misuse his new powers for purposes less than God's purpose..... the misuse of practical everyday power, the misuse of religious power, and the misuse of political power. Jesus passes all three tests and so "the devil left him" for a while. Whatever our demons may be, we are encouraged here to face them honestly – it's the only way up.

[Matthew 4:1-11]



Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,

and on their hands they will bear you up,

so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written,

'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me. "Jesus said to him,

"Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

It has been said that temptations are usually about things we perceive as being good (at least for ourselves) or else we wouldn't be tempted. Jesus is the master of spiritual discernment, of hearing the nuances. That is why we should follow his practice of spending time alone with God, listening for the truth about our lives

*Prayer*

*Lord Jesus,*

*you entered into the lonely desert,  
you faced hunger, danger and temptation  
and did not turn aside  
but chose the way of self-giving love.*

*Strengthen us to resist the false attraction*

*of easy answers, magic fixes, and abuses of power  
and help us, too, to know our angels from our demons. Amen*