

MARCH 9, 2025 FATHER FRANCIS SALASAR

There is a story of this couple who were struggling to make ends meet with one salary of the husband. One day he confronted his wife with the receipt for a \$250 dress she had bought. "How could you do this?!" "I was outside the store looking at the dress in the window, and then I found myself trying it on," she explained. "It was like Satan was whispering in my ear, 'You look fabulous in that dress. Buy it!'" "Well," the man replied, "You know how I deal with that kind of temptation. I say, 'Get behind me, Satan!'" "I did," replied his wife, "but then he said, 'It looks fabulous from back here, too!'" We all go through moments of temptation, and Jesus was not immune to temptation, as well.

We find, in the gospel of today, one of the most profound and revealing moments in the life of Jesus Christ. Fresh from His baptism in the River Jordan, led by the spirit Jesus enters the wilderness. The wilderness is often a place of testing, isolation, and vulnerability.

It is interesting to note the nature of the temptation. The devil targets Jesus' identity, His mission, and His trust in God. The devil approaches Jesus with three specific temptations, each targeting a different area of human vulnerability:

1. The Temptation of Provision (v. 3-4) or the basic need: "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." The devil attacks Jesus' physical need, urging Him to use His power for selfish gain. But Jesus responds, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" He reminds us that our ultimate sustenance comes from God's Word, not just physical food.
2. The Temptation of Power (v. 5-8): The devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offers them in exchange for worship. This temptation appeals to the desire for control and influence. But Jesus

rebukes him, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" True power comes from serving God, not from worldly ambition.

3. The Temptation of Pride (v. 9-12): The devil twists Scripture, urging Jesus to throw Himself off the temple to prove His divinity. But Jesus counters, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" He shows us that faith is not about testing God but trusting Him.

Each temptation reveals a strategy of the enemy: to distort God's promises, exploit our weaknesses, and lead us away from dependence on God. But Jesus models how to resist: by standing firmly on the truth of Scripture.

It is also interesting to note that the gospel of today concludes by stating, 'when the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time'. This reminds us that temptation is not a one-time event but an ongoing battle. Yet, Jesus emerged victorious. Jesus' victory in the wilderness assures us that we, too, can overcome temptation. We have the same tools He used: the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth of God's Word, and the assurance of God's presence.

In the first reading we heard, Moses instructs the Israelites to bring the first fruits of their harvest to the Lord as an offering. But we need to remember that this is more than a ritual; it is an act of remembrance. As they present their offering, they are to recite a confession of faith, recounting God's mighty acts: how He heard their cries in Egypt, delivered them with a mighty hand, and brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey.

This declaration is a powerful reminder that gratitude is rooted in remembering. When we come in an act of worship, give him thanks or our prayers, we need to remember that we cannot change God. But they help us to change ourselves. When we come in an act of worship, we

remember what God has done, when we give thanks, we acknowledge that God is the provider, and when we ask for our needs, we place our trust in Him.

So dear brothers and sisters, as we go on with our lives, let us take heart, knowing that the temptations Jesus faced would be ours too, but so is the victory we have in Christ. The wilderness may be challenging, but it is also where we grow. So, let us walk in the power of the Spirit, armed with the Word of God, and confident in the love of our Heavenly Father. For in Christ, we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).