

21 February 2010

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

# Lord, put me to the test!

READINGS: Dt. 26:4-10; Ps. 90; Rm. 10:8-13; Lk. 4,1-13

## The Gospel According to Luke

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

## LET US LET OURSELVES 'BE TEMPTED'

To begin Lent means to allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to put us to the test, as Jesus did. After his baptism, during which his identity was revealed, the Lord was called to verify or prove who he was; better yet, to test his fidelity to Sonship, to his consecration. It is not enough to proclaim that we are 'called'; we must enter into the test, and allow God to examine what is truly in our hearts. We need to ask for this in prayer: "Lord, put me to the test". During these forty days we are open to verification, we cannot gloss things over. The test that the Spirit wants to send us concerns the three fundamentals of the life of one who has been called: poverty; power; success.

We cannot pride ourselves in being "beloved children" if we do not love an effective (not dreamed!) personal and communitarian poverty; we cannot present ourselves as 'consecrated' if we will not refuse power, visibility, and even our very selves; we cannot call ourselves 'the elect' if we do not renounce the criteria of success - results, even apostolic ones. Jesus overcame his trial in the desert confronting the enticements of the demon with the primacy of God and God's Word: after this verification of his identity as Son he was able to call his disciples. And he was able to do this because, as Mark tells us, his desert was transformed into a place of welcome, hospitality, and fruitfulness. If we do not let ourselves be sifted by the Spirit, we may live tranquil and comfortable lives, but our walled gardens, protected and clean, will be changed into inhospitable and sterile deserts. How many religious houses and parishes are like this? Perhaps too many.

So ... Let's let ourselves 'be tempted'.

Father Giuseppe Forlai, igs

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus, thank you for having let yourself be subjected to temptation.*

*To show us your true face involved a long combat,  
that cannot be resolved in a few hours, lasting even forty days.*

*Make us strong and determined, Lord,  
to never cut off our hearts from the certainty that,  
even if our road is a long one,  
you have paid the price of victory over evil for us all.  
If we remain close to you, evil will never prevail. Never!*