

The light of testing

Mt. 4:1-11



The 7 lights of Easter



THE LIGHT OF TESTING

Mt. 4:1-11

1st Sunday of Lent

THE LIGHT OF LISTENING

Mt. 17:1-9

2st Sunday of Lent

THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT

Jn 4:5-42

3rd Sunday of Lent

THE LIGHT OF FAITH

Jn. 9:1-41

4th Sunday of Lent

THE LIGHT OF THE MASTER

Jn. 11:1-45

5th Sunday of Lent

THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS

Mt. 26:14 – 27:66

Palm Sunday

THE LIGHT OF EASTER

Jn. 20:1-9

Easter Sunday

On this First Sunday of Lent, we are all illuminated by the special light that comes from the desert of testing. *Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test.* The word “test” is actually the passive form of the verb *peirazo*, which, in its turn, is a translation of the Hebrew *nsh* (to examine, to explore, to tempt, to put to the test).

Why was Jesus put to the test? What is the meaning behind this choice of God? Jesus had just emerged from the waters of the Jordan. He was surrounded by the presence of the Spirit. The loving voice of the Father still echoed in his heart: “You are my beloved Son!” And now this Son is called to follow the arduous path through the desert, where water is scarce and vegetation negligible—a place uncondusive to habitation. The purpose of this testing—which can present itself in thousands of ways—is to see if Jesus can be dissuaded from his filial mission: *If you are the Son of God, then save yourself by using the divine power that the Father has placed in your hands. Don’t accept the limits of your human condition! Consider your equality with God as the key to success and take advantage of it! Live like God!*

Consequently, the temptation is not only to surpass human limitations and claim the place of God: “Tell these stones to turn into loaves... Throw yourself down... I will give you all these kingdoms...” but above all to destabilize relationships. Jesus has to choose how to live his Sonship—either within his relationship with the Father or outside it. Should he provide food for himself or allow his Father to provide it? Should he obey the Word of salvation or use it to satisfy his own desire for power? Should he reign as a servant or allow himself to be served as a king?

From temptation to adoration of the true God one must inevitably travel the fatiguing road that winds through the desert, which purifies, strips, discerns: “My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing” (Sir. 2:1). God is love and, as such, he requires that his children’s freedom be put to the test. Love is love only when it is freely accepted and given. Jesus emerges from his test as a Son who is truly free.

Prayer

*Father, give us a contrite heart,
completely focused on you.
Make us receptive to the wisdom of your testing
and to the liberating
and filial experience of your love
as we ceaselessly search for your paths. Amen.*