

Testing, 1-2-3

Intro. It is not easy to tell other people about our temptations. Most of us would be too embarrassed. And yet the Lord admitted to his disciples *he* was tempted. Was he embarrassed by it? He must not have been; he is the only one who could have talked about this experience. It shows he truly emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in our likeness. [Phil. 2:7, RSV]

I. This comes after the Lord revealed himself to John the Baptist, was baptized and heard the Father's voice of encouragement. Still filled the Spirit, he was led into the desert to prepare for his mission. Luke tells us it was at the *end* of the forty days of fasting that the devil appeared, when the Lord was physically weakest. Several times the devil starts the test with, "**If** you are the Son of God..." As was said

at our bible study this week, temptations always have a bit of truth to them. That is why we can be fooled. The Lord clearly knew who he was and didn't get fooled into proving it by making bread out of a rock or bungee-jumping off the top of temple.

We *can* be tempted when we are strong, riding high, full of ourselves. But temptation most often comes to us when we are weak: tired, angry, resentful, down, alone. In other words, when we are not in our right minds. That is why, when we look back on the moments we gave in to temptation, we kick ourselves saying, "How could I have done that?" It doesn't mean we have *no responsibility* for our actions. It means when we are fully aware of our dignity *and identity* as daughters and sons of God, we don't do sinful things. It is then we are filled

with God's grace and led by the Spirit which strengthen us to resist temptation.

Concl. During the days of Lent as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the most important feast of our faith, we try to live differently than usual. Most of us can't take off to Marywood or other retreat place away from our daily responsibilities. We can try to create a "desert place" in a room at home or in the yard; or commit to regular walks in one of the many wonderful parks or sit by a lake or river or beach. We can create a deserted place by drastically cutting down on the amount of digital noise such as email, texts, podcasts and the various "chats." The "remedies" to the three temptations are what the Lord prescribed in the gospel of Ash Wednesday. *Fast* to regain self-control and self-discipline. Give *alms* - time or money - to detach from material

things. *Pray* and read scripture to rely on the grace from God [The Gospel of Luke, Pablo T. Gadenz, Baker Academic Publishing, 2018, p. 96]. It should not be an embarrassment to admit to temptations. Everyone has them, even the Lord. What *can be embarrassing* is admitting to being tricked or giving in to temptation. I'm not talking about the extra chocolate chip cookie or that second ice cream sandwich. Judging others, ugly gossip, not respecting ourselves or others and worse, *are embarrassing*. But they can be forgiven. To paraphrase Pete Townshend, "Don't get fooled again. [Pete Townshend, *We Don't Get Fooled Again*, The Who, 1971.]

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