

Temptation: Who We Are?

Intro. A PBS show I enjoy watching helps people find out about who they are. It does not take place on an island, a worksite or in a house. It unfolds in people's unfamiliar family history. Well-known people admit there are things they don't know about parts of their family. They often find some amazing things, not only about their families, but about who *they* are.

I. After being reunited with his cousin, John the Baptist at the Jordan River, the Lord went to the desert. The testing of the Lord parallels the Israelites' difficult journey in the desert when God tested their faithfulness. The Lord prepared himself for his work the way many people have. He went off by himself, he fasted from food and he prayed. The tests were three. Use his power as God's Son to

turn rocks into bread to satisfy his own hunger. Throw himself off the temple to see if he trusted God to take care of him. Worship the devil and be given what is *already his*: the world's power and glory. The results of this testing showed first who he *wasn't*. He wasn't interested in using his power for himself. He wasn't interested in testing the Father. He wasn't interested in the world's riches. Most importantly, it showed who he *was*: the Son of God. When we are unsure of who we are, a lot of people and advertising are very happy to tell us; some suggestions are lies. Part of growing up is figuring out who we are and what we want to do. It can be frustrating, leading to doubts about everything including ourselves and God. In life we experience tragedies like accidents, illnesses or the loss of friendships. These can also cause us to doubt who

we are. The Lord had some of these experiences: death among his family and friends; betrayals. He never forgot he is the Son of God. Okay, so he *is* the Lord, but he was tested throughout his life as we are. One of his best friends suggested he not think about suffering and dying. Peter said to him: “God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” [Mt. 16:22] Remember his prayer on the Mount of Olives before his arrest, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me. But not as I wish but as you do.” [Mt. 26:39] In his attacks on the Lord, the tempter tried to get him to doubt who he was by saying, “*If you are the Son of God...*” Of course, the Lord knew he was the Son of God. He didn’t have to prove it. On our good days, we know who we are. But on days when we are tired, hurt or confused, it is hard to

avoid temptations that promise to make us feel better.

Concl. During these forty days of Lent, our church suggests we face the temptations that can lead us to question our identity as a person and a child of God and recognize them for what they are: **lies**. Lies like, “Everybody will like you better if you do this...” “Just once can’t hurt.” People who succeed in regularly refusing such temptations have relationships with family, friends and the Lord for help. Everyone struggles with difficult things, yet here we are, with all our doubts *and* belief. Recently a well-known quarterback said he was going on a retreat, away by himself to think about his life and future. He was ridiculed unmercifully by the world of money and power who see no value in reflecting on our lives. It is not important if we agree with *how*

he does it. At least he is reflecting about his
direction in life. **If we can face our own
temptations during these forty days,
we might not only find out who we are *not*,
but more importantly, who we truly are: daughters
and sons of God.**

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