

Resisting Temptation's Voice

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Picture a young professional offered a lucrative promotion that requires cutting corners ethically and neglecting family obligations. The lure of success, wealth, and social status is hard to resist. This scenario reflects the reality of human temptation: the desire for instant gratification, comfort, and validation. Why do we find temptations so powerful? Because they promise immediate satisfaction while hiding long-term consequences, preying on our weaknesses and innate desire for control, security, and recognition.

The Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent (Luke 4:1-13) recounts Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness. After fasting for forty days, Jesus is approached with three temptations. The first appeals to his physical hunger: "Turn this stone to bread." The second promises worldly power: "I will give you all the kingdoms if you worship me." The third challenges him to test God's protection by jumping from the temple's pinnacle. Each temptation corresponds to the very sources of our own struggles: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

How does Jesus resist? Not with arguments or displays of power but by leaning into the Word of God. To the first temptation, Jesus responds, "Man does not live by bread alone." To the second, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." To the third, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Jesus demonstrates that his strength lies not in self-reliance but in complete trust in the Father. Jesus rejects worldly promises for the eternal truths of God.

The wilderness setting is significant. It symbolizes the desolation of the human soul when separated from God, a place of testing and growth. Similarly, the devil's challenge in Jerusalem, the spiritual heart of Israel, underscores the stakes of the battle: not just Jesus's fidelity but ours as well.

St. Pope John Paul II often reminded us that resisting temptation is not just about saying "no" to sin but about saying "yes" to something greater: a life of fulfillment in Christ. The pope wrote, "It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness." True joy is not found in fleeting pleasures or worldly power but in surrendering to God's will. To resist temptation, Pope John Paul II urged three things: seek God's guidance, reject mediocrity, and find fulfillment in Christ.

In this Lenten season, we are invited to follow Jesus's example. When tempted, turn to prayer and Scripture. Resist the pull of compromise by holding firm to your values. And remember, nothing the world offers can compare to the joy of a life rooted in God. Through Christ, the same strength that enabled him to overcome temptation is available to us. Let us not settle for mediocrity, but let us strive for the fullness of life only God can provide.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy