

“Lead US not into temptation”

Before Jesus teaches us to pray – “and lead us not into temptation” – He Himself is lead into temptation. Jesus doesn’t get lost, or take a wrong turn, and find Himself out in the wilderness. No, St. Matthew tells us that the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness “to be tempted by the devil.”

Now, why would God do such a thing? Because, as the Scripture shows us, the Holy Spirit leads the Son in the Father’s plan of salvation for the world --- even as God the Holy Spirit leads all who believe and follow Jesus.

Conceived by the Holy Spirit, the Son of God is led into the womb of the Virgin Mary. Led by the Spirit, the infant Jesus is presented in the Temple. At His baptism in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descends and remains on Him – as He soaks up the sin of the world – and is led to stand before Caiaphas and Pilate, and then to a cross --- but first, there is a wilderness.

Still dripping from His Baptism, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into temptation. Because the First Adam succumbed to a temptation and thereby lead the world into sin and death – so a Second Adam is given to be the means of forgiveness, and to lead us into eternal life.

The Father sends His Son – Jesus, the Second Adam – to take the place of Adam and all his descendants. Jesus takes your place in the flesh – under the law – receiving the wages of sin – enduring God’s wrath – and suffering everything you suffer, including all of your temptations. [P]

The writer to the Hebrews says it this way: “For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” And again, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 2:18; 4:15)

In your place, Jesus is led into the wilderness, the place of the beasts, the evil spirits, and the devil. And when the devil sees this man Jesus, he must think – *déjà vu!*

This reminds me of that first man (Adam) – and he was such an easy target. It was a piece of cake (or, should I say, fruit?) to get him to sin – even though he had everything!

The Lord God had given him a helpmate – dominion over creation – the garden with all its trees for food. Adam had everything but he was not God. So, guess where the devil attacked? That's right – he used that tree in the midst of the garden. "Take and eat" and "you will be like God."

Now the Second Adam stands before the devil. He may look like the First Adam, but this One IS God – not only dripping from His Baptism, but with the voice of His Father ringing in His ears ("This is my beloved Son").

Though truly God, Jesus is as much a man as the First Adam (and you). If He does not eat and drink, He will suffer and die. Having fasted for 40 days and 40 nights He's HUNGRY – so, guess where the devil attacks.

Just the mention of bread brings back the smell of fresh baked bread – after all, they say the way to a man's heart is through His belly. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" – go ahead, "take and eat."

But, like Adam, God has given Jesus everything He needs. His flesh and blood may be starving for food – but the words and promises of His Father will nourish and sustain His life.

The devil is crafty. If the Word of God satisfies Jesus – he'll use God's own Word to lead Him into temptation. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" – after all – the Father has promised to rescue you. Go ahead, "take and eat" this Word of God.

The First Adam lived by eating what God had given him to eat – and by not eating what the Lord had not given to him. So also, Jesus. He will live by NOT consuming this Word of God given in temptation – and is well fed by the Word which says, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

This Jesus fellow is a tough nut to crack – I'd better change tactics. Since the first Adam failed to be the human being that God created him to be – maybe Jesus will fall for being the "Son of God" that He's supposed to be.

No more IF you are the Son of God – but rather, since you ARE the Son of God – you should have it all – "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory." Just bend the knee and worship me, and you can restore peace to all that Adam has thrown into chaos.

True, one little sin – one act of trusting the devil instead of God – brought death to all creation. But the only way to restore God's creation, is to "worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."

Indeed, the highest form of worship is to receive what the Lord promises and offers – and so Jesus worships the Father. He trusts that the Father and the Holy Spirit will guard and keep Him so that the devil may not "deceive Him or mislead Him into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.

Jesus trusts that the Father and the Holy Spirit will lead Him through these temptations – to Jerusalem, Caiaphas, Pilate, and the cross – through death and the grave --- all for the salvation of the world – for you and your salvation.

All this Jesus has done for you. He has taken your place, carried your sin, endured and OVERCOME all your temptations – that by His suffering, death, and resurrection – you might share in His victory over sin, death and the devil.

This is the victory He gives to you as He invites you to eat from the Tree of Life – as He gives you to eat of the fruit of His cross – His very own Body and Blood. In His Body and Blood, He has faced every temptation that you face – sympathizing with you in your weakness – and now gives His Body and Blood so that you may be without sin.

Dearly beloved, "take and eat" – for, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.