



Bringing Home the Word

First Sunday of Lent
March 10, 2019

Jesus Is Our Example for Resisting Temptation

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When I was on a pilgrimage to Israel, we visited Masada, the last stronghold of the Jews after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The temperature hit 117 degrees the day we came. We wandered around and wondered what it must have been like to hold out for a long time. When we returned to our bus, we couldn't wait to get to the cold water that awaited us. The priest said, "The Jews were in the desert for forty years; Jesus was in the desert for forty days; you've been in the desert for forty minutes. Think about that."

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders.

Romans 10:8-13

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Luke 4:1-13

When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

I have no doubt that Jesus was tempted to give himself food and water when he was enduring the desert heat. I have no doubt that in his agony he might also have thought about seizing power for himself. These are the things that tempt us when we are worn out, beaten down, or simply think we are not getting enough of what we believe we deserve.

Lent begins with the temptation of Jesus. Like us in all things but sin, he knew about being and feeling deprived and weak. And while his temptations came while he was in an actual desert, our harsh and barren places may be physical, psychological, or spiritual. We may feel lost, alone, helpless, and sometimes hopeless. In our times of weakness, evil can find a foothold and convince us that we must control our lives, that we can and should have whatever we want. In this account, we find in Jesus an example of how to resist temptation—patiently, humbly, with trust in God's promise of salvation. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

The devil wants you to quarrel among yourselves, because in this way he divides you, he defeats you, and he robs you of faith. Therefore, solidarity among brothers and sisters to defend the faith!...Go forward and don't let the devil divide you!

—Visit to Bañado Norte, Paraguay, February 19, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When do I feel tempted by the enemy of my soul?
- How can I rely on God to overcome those temptations?

Finding Our Way Home



By Joyce Rupp

"Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep" (Luke 15:6).

Recently I received a photo from friends visiting Ireland. It shows a sheep grazing on a green hillside near a serene cottage. The sheep has a large red splotch of paint on its woolly side, a mark of the farmer's ownership so the sheep can be reclaimed if it wanders.

We also are marked, not with paint but by the compassionate care of the Good Shepherd. No matter how we traverse off the spiritual path, we will be found and reclaimed. We can count on the Good Shepherd to care about us and continue urging us homeward.

There are as many ways to stray as there are sheep in a flock. Sometimes sheep stray on purpose, lured by a false

desire to find something tastier than in the place they now have. At other times they stray by accident, so focused on their munching that they forget to look where they are going.

The same is true of us. Not every straying is sinful. We can lose our spiritual awareness when overcome with busyness, grief, depression, or abuse. Difficult economic times can lead to anxiety and away from our Peacemaker. We can lose ourselves in wanting the ideal family, the perfect situation. We can wander off in the false hope of never having enough, always seeking more.

We can also lose our way on purpose, giving in to sinful choices and selfish endeavors, allowing our ego satisfactions to create havoc with our relationships. We can stray into the land of jealousy, anger, hatred, prejudice, and other pastures that steer us away from the Good Shepherd's land.

The Good Shepherd and His Helpers

Like a farmer with his wandering sheep, the Good Shepherd looks for us when we've strayed. The Good Shepherd might come as a voice within us, reminding us who we're meant to be and how far we've drifted. Maybe we're called home by a sense of how we need to change, to return to that part of us that has been swept away by laziness, ego, or arrogance. Or the Shepherd might be an encouraging reminder of the beauty within us that we've forgotten in our daily pursuit of duties and obligations.

Sometimes the Shepherd sends a helper to bring back the beloved creature. We can be found through the aid of

others. We find our way home when another forgives us for our foolishness or wrongdoing, embraces us in our grief or desperation, urges us to resume living in a loving way, or reminds us of our self-worth and purpose in life.

Being found can bring a sigh of relief that we are back safely on the path that leads to greater harmony with the Good Shepherd. But there are times when being found doesn't feel so great. We feel irritated and challenged because we'd rather stay and chew the green grass of our isolation and selfishness than come home to the possibility of change.

Homeward Bound

Lent is a time to be found, to come home. We need to take a look around the countryside of our hearts and see how we've wandered away from the Good Shepherd, either purposely or by accident. We might also reflect on how we can be instruments of the Good Shepherd, reaching out and helping others find that lost part of themselves.

Let us call on the compassionate and devotional love of the Good Shepherd to bring what is lost in us, and in others, back home again. +

**PRAYER**

Lord, give me the courage to accept the painful, ugly realities of life and become your advocate of truth and justice in the world.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 11-16

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Lv 19:1–2, 11–18 / Mt 25:31–46
Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 55:10–11 / Mt 6:7–15
Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Jon 3:1–10 / Lk 11:29–32

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Est C:12, 14–16, 23–25 / Mt 7:7–12
Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 18:21–28 / Mt 5:20–26
Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Dt 26:16–19 / Mt 5:43–48

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