

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

**When he calls on me, I will answer him;  
I will deliver him and give him glory,  
I will grant him length of days.**

**COLLECT**

Grant, almighty God,  
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,  
that we may grow in understanding  
of the riches hidden in Christ  
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Gen 2:7-9 3:1-7

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. The Lord God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It asked the woman, "Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death.' Then the serpent said to the woman: "No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil." The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**RESP. PSALM**

Psalm 50

Response:

**Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.  
In you compassion blot out my offence.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin. **(R.)**
2. My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;  
what is evil in your sight I have done. **(R.)**
3. A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
nor deprive me of your holy Spirit. **(R.)**

4. Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervour sustain me.  
O Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth shall declare your praise.  
**(R.)**

**SECOND READING**

Rm 5:12-19

(For shorter form read between >< )

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

>Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned.< Sin existed in the world long before the Law was given. There was no law and so no one could be accused of the sin of "law-breaking," yet death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even though their sin, unlike that of Adam, was not a matter of breaking a law. Adam prefigured the One to come, but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man's fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift. The results of the gift also outweigh the results of one man's sin: for after one single fall came judgement with a verdict of condemnation, now after many falls comes grace with its verdict of acquittal. >If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God<**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Praise to you, O Christ,  
king of eternal glory!**

**Man does not live on bread alone  
but on every word that comes from the  
mouth of God.**

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

**GOSPEL**

Mt 4:1-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves." But he replied, "Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God" he said "throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you in his angel's charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him, "Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test."

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "I will give you all these," he said, "if you fall at my feet and worship me." Then Jesus replied, "Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God,  
and serve him alone."

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

**THE APOSTLES' CREED**

**I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
(all bow during the next two lines)  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
**Amen.****

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Give us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray,  
to make these offerings,  
for with them we celebrate the beginning  
of this venerable and sacred time.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

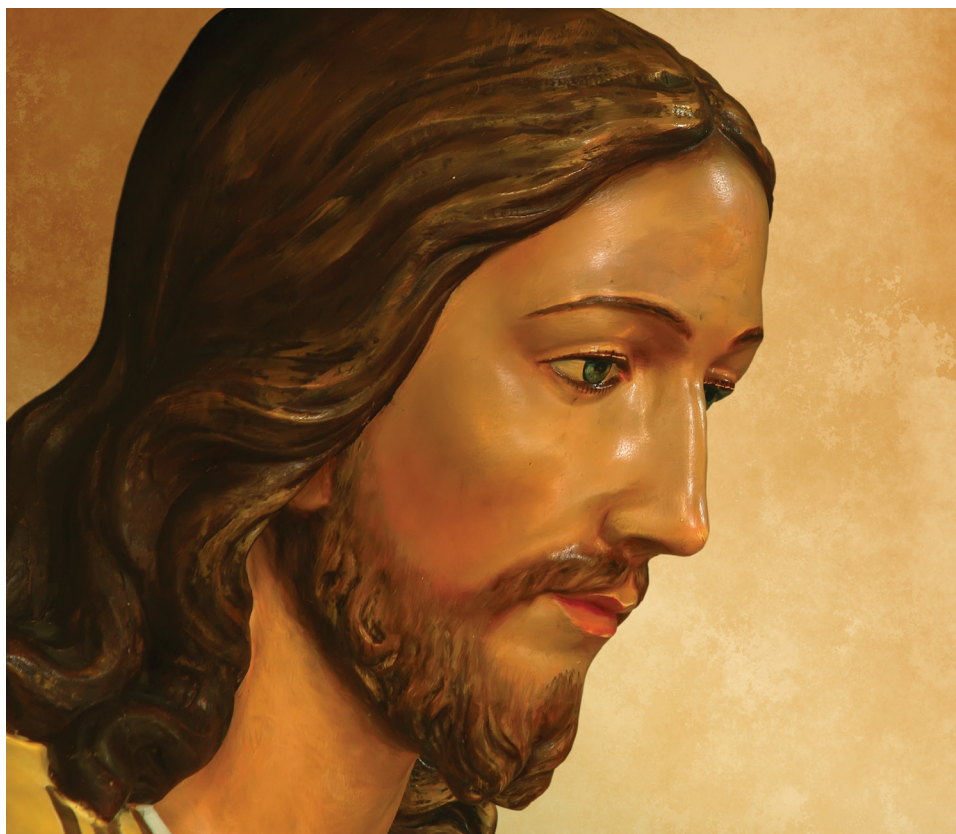
**One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes forth from the  
mouth of God.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Renewed now with heavenly bread,  
by which faith is nourished, hope increased,  
and charity strengthened,  
we pray, O Lord,  
that we may learn to hunger for Christ,  
the true and living Bread,  
and strive to live by every word  
which proceeds from your mouth.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

May bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray,  
come down upon your people,  
that hope may grow in tribulation,  
virtue be strengthened in temptation  
and eternal redemption be assured.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**



# JESUS IS TESTED

MATTHEW 4:1-11

## REFLECT

**T**he testing scene occurs just before the start of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. Jesus is presented as being single-minded in his dedication to his mission as the Son of God. He will not be taking any shortcuts to fulfil his destiny, which will find its final and clearest expression in the Cross, not in the miracles. This will be the final test, and the struggle Jesus will undergo in Gethsemane will be with a similar question: will he be the Messiah God intends? It might be worth reflecting on this aspect of the Gospel tradition, that Jesus had to struggle with this temptation to find an easier way, to conform to the popular idea of what the Messiah should be. The evangelist John presents Jesus being tested in similar but more subtle ways by the people around Jesus. The bible generally sees the tension between doing right or wrong as coming from within ourselves or from other people. ■

## LEARN

It is better to describe this incident as The Testing of Jesus rather than The Temptations.

The Testing scene reveals Jesus as truly the Son of God at the beginning of his mission in Galilee.

The Book of Deuteronomy emphasises the covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel.

## Today's gospel reading presents Jesus being tested by the devil.

The mention of the wilderness or desert and the forty days should remind us of the time the people of Israel spent in that arid and dangerous region, where they found themselves completely dependent on the Lord who had brought them out of slavery in Egypt. They were tested in terms of food, water and their proper relationship to their Lord. The answers Jesus gives to defeat the suggestions of the devil are not random quotations: they are taken from the book of Deuteronomy and from passages which refer to that threefold testing of Israel by the Lord, a test which Israel failed.

This testing follows the Baptism of Jesus, a second epiphany in which Jesus is revealed by the divine voice as "my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased". The question now is, How does Jesus understand what it means to be the Son of God? In two of the testing scenes, the devil says, "If you are the Son of God" and challenges him to perform a miracle simply to prove this. But in so doing Jesus would abuse his divine power, and his use of the texts from Deuteronomy shows that he will live by the covenant relationship which the Lord expresses as "You will be my people and I will be your God". It is an exclusive relationship, freely accepted, and the basis of Israel's belief and trust in their God. Jesus passes the test which Israel failed by relying on the word of God and all that it entailed from the covenant understanding and emphasis of Deuteronomy. In this he shows himself to be truly God's Son, the Beloved, in whom the Lord is well pleased.

It was God who tested Israel in the wilderness. We should note that it was the Spirit of God who led Jesus out into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. In a way, the devil was acting as God's agent. Jesus accepted to be tested by God as Israel was, but refused to put God to the test. In this scene we are invited to reflect on the identity of Jesus and what it means for him to be God's Son. ■

## SAY

"People do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

## DO

Be conscious of what you are doing when you make the Sign of the Cross: the Cross is the sign of what it meant for Jesus to be the Son of God.

