

## March 6, 2021 Reflection

Matthew's gospel gives us a rich and full accounting of the trial of Jesus in the desert after He had been baptized by John the Baptist and proclaimed by God the Father that He was his "beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This is the first time in the gospels that we hear the Jesus is the son of God; Until this passage, we knew Jesus as only the son of Joseph and Mary, and, therefore, only as a human being. We are being introduced to Jesus as the Son of God the Father.

It is as both God and Man that Jesus is led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted or tested by the Evil One. He spends 40 days in fasting and contemplation and then is visited by Satan who tempts him 3 times with food to relieve his hunger, with riches to give him great wealth, and with power to rule the world, if Jesus would worship him. Jesus replies with a resounding "NO" to all of these offerings by Satan, ending with "Away with you Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him." Jesus has successfully resisted the temptations of the devil even in his diminished state after 40 days of fasting. He has shown us that even in his human state, he can resist the Evil One and we, as humans, can follow His example.

Lent is the Church's yearly commemoration of these 40 days wherein we are asked to examine our lives in the light of the example of Jesus. Can we, as humans follow Jesus' example and resist the temptations of Satan that would lead us away from a joyful reunion with the Lord in Heaven? Those of us who were raised in the Catholic Church can remember our own family's commemoration of this ritual, often pledging to give up one of our favorite desserts; collecting daily for a worthwhile charity, etc. The principle was to deprive ourselves of various pleasures for the duration of Lent just as Jesus had to endure, in order to emulate him. This is a practice still favored by many Catholics around the world. Recently a client told me that her family (which follows its cultural traditions) had asked her what she thought the family should give up for Lent so which she answered: Gossiping! A nasty habit that carried with it a lot of hurt for family members but which, no one but she, had seen its dark and evil side.

In recent years, more and more Christians are choosing to add something to their lives that is more in the nature of giving of themselves to commemorate Jesus' 40 harrowing days in the desert. People often help out at food banks, take care of their neighbors' children when needed, knit shawls and other clothing for people in need and grief. I could go on and on, you all know the new practices that have sprung up among the faithful to honor Christ's sacrifices.