

Prayerful preparation for Mass

First Sunday of Lent : Year A

Set aside a prayer time and begin by relaxing and coming to stillness.

Read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, paying attention to any words that stand out for you. Stay with those words for a few minutes and wait to see if God is present to you.

Matthew 4:1-11. The temptation in the wilderness.

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 angels' 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.

Lectio Divina Prayerfully preparing for Sunday Mass

These Latin words mean spiritual reading of the Scriptures. It is a method for reading the Bible which for many centuries has been a treasure of the Christian faith as we believe that through Scripture Our Lord is truly present.

The aim is to foster a relationship between the one praying the God to whom we pray. This method helps the one who prays develop a listening and waiting attitude for the promptings, nudges and inspirations that come from God.

As we become used to this way of praying, our image of a 'silent, distant, mysterious God can be supplemented by a personal, intimate experience of God's desires for us.

As with all methods of prayer it is important not to get caught up in trying to 'get it right'. It is always recommended that once an awareness of God is experienced, the method is abandoned, and we surrender to God and allow God to direct our prayer.

Reflections on Matthew 4:1-11

In this extract Matthew writes how the devil presents three temptations to Jesus. The devil tempts Jesus to use his power to appease his hunger; he tempts Jesus to put God's promise of protection to the test; and he offers Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will worship the devil. In each case, Jesus resists the temptation, rebuking the devil with words from Scripture.

Each temptation offers insight into both God and the human condition. Jesus' rejection of the temptations shows that he will not put God to the test.

Grounding himself on the word and authority of Scripture, Jesus rebukes the devil, confident in God's protection and faithfulness.

As we start our journey through Lent, our Sunday readings call us to adopt the same confidence that Jesus had in the face of temptation:

God's word alone will suffice;

God's promise of protection can be trusted;

God alone is God.

Compiled from websites Loyola Press and Wednesday Word and CTS booklet, *Lectio Divina*.