

As we begin Lent, the Gospel of Saint Luke tells us a story in which the challenge of tempting Jesus makes the devil so desperate that he imitates Jesus and quotes Scripture to induce him to betray his identity.

Here Jesus in his public ministry, sought to prepare himself, and, being true man, he had to live through the various options open to him.

Each of the temptations touches on huge issues in human life and development. Should he save by performing miracles, such as the spectacular provision of bread? Should he save by using political military force, as the conquering Messiah? Should he save by establishing his own scheme, rewriting revelation so as to challenge God's plan with his own interpretation, and put God to the test? Each of his ripostes to Satan forms an element of his profession of faith, a faith in the unbreakable love between the Father and the Son, nurtured, sustained and consecrated by the Spirit. God's ways are different from man's ones.

Each of the readings is in fact a confession, a proclamation of faith. Jesus' answers derive from Deuteronomy, and take us straight to the profession made at the first fruits. St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans provides a one-line Credo that sums up all we believe. In each case God is seen as one who saves. He freed the ancient People of Israel from their slavery and brought them into the Promised Land. Jesus now becomes the new Moses: Moses received the Law on Sinai and led the people through the Wilderness; Jesus is the Word, the Law enfleshed, who leads us through the, confusion, and sorrow of life to new spiritual lands.

The key lies in his unshakable love for the Father, a love sanctified and empowered in the Spirit. The Psalm is a prayer for protection in evil times: it was the prayer of the Israelites, and of Jesus himself. It becomes our prayer too. If we set our love on the Father, he will rescue us. The Spirit will empower us to follow Jesus, who in his humanity has visited every temptation and overcome it.

Likewise, we will have many temptations and for lifetime. Each one of us has probably faced the hardest ones. Sometimes our hardships constitute temptations as they can show us how our faith is weak as we fall into despair. We are then called to rely on Christ who overcome devil, so that, with grace granted to us, we could deal with our own temptations.