

Daily Devotions

Devotions – March 6-12, 2022

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3 Temptations and 4 Commemorations

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Today's Gospel reading, Luke 4:1-13, is the passage about Jesus in the wilderness being tempted by the devil.

The First Temptation: Luke 4:1-4

Verse 3: **"The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.'"**

Jesus was very hungry. Forty days in a desert with no food is a long, long time. There are times when we are very hungry, too - for food, for success, for things to go our way. Wouldn't it be great to say the words, and a meal would appear before us. Or the challenge facing us would be met, or finally everyone would see that our way was indeed the best way.

Jesus referred the devil to the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy, where the story is told of the Israelites who also spent a long time (40 years) in the wilderness and were given needed food and raiment by God. It was a test, to see whether they would keep the Lord's commandments, not so different from the devil's temptations of Jesus.

Deuteronomy 8:3 describes God's purpose with the wandering Israelites, and Jesus quotes this passage in refuting the devil's idea: "He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that *one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*"

Test One, done. The devil is flummoxed. But the devil is not done.

Let's Pray: *Be with and bless us, guide and protect us with your love, with your strength, and with your wisdom, O Lord.*



Monday, March 7, 2022

Commemoration:

PERPETUA (c. 180 - March 7, 202) and FELICITY and four other catechumens, martyrs at Carthage in North Africa.

Bible Verses: Matthew 10:16, 22

¹⁶See, I am sending you like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves...²²And you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Perpetua was an educated noblewoman who, along with her servant Felicity, chose to become Christians. Her husband was pagan. At that time, the Roman Emperor Severus forbade conversion to Christianity on pain of death.

Perpetua and Felicity and the other four were arrested, taken to prison and sentenced to death by wild animals in the arena at Carthage in North Africa. As they waited in prison, Perpetua nursed her infant, and Felicity birthed a child. On March 7th in the year 202, the day of their execution, the wild animals did not touch Perpetua and Felicity. Instead, they were killed by Roman swordsmen in the arena.

And Perpetua did something that has created a place for her in the history of Christianity: she wrote in a journal until the day of her death. The journal was kept, and she is now one of the first diarists, writing about the early Christian community in North Africa.

Let's Pray: *Thank you, Lord, for the life and writings of Perpetua. May we find the courage to be faithful to you in all things. Amen.*



Tuesday, March 8, 2022

The Second Temptation: Luke 4:5-8

Verse 7: **After showing Jesus all of the world's kingdoms, the devil said to him, "If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."**

Oh, my, to have such power! To be able to manipulate lives, and spend gazillions of dollars, and oversee projects to make you even richer. These could light up the eyes of almost anyone.

Again, Jesus cites the teaching from Deuteronomy, this time Chapter 6:10-13, where the Israelites are reminded that the land they are inheriting has fine cities, houses filled with goods, vineyards and olive groves which they did not toil to build.

Here's what they needed to do: "...take care that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The Lord your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear." And, as we read in Luke, Jesus answers the devil, "It is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

These days one thinks of our government leaders, the legislators whom we voted for, and will vote again come November this year. Surely there are times when these folks see immense possibilities for personal gain for themselves. May they always keep in mind that they are representatives, that they are in these positions of power for the sake of us all, not just for themselves.

Test Two, and Jesus is winning. But, of course, the devil is not through with him.

Let's Pray: *Be with and bless them, guide and protect them with your love, with your strength, and with your wisdom, O Lord.*



Wednesday, March 9, 2022

The Third Temptation: Luke 4:9-13

Verses 9-10: **⁹From the top of the temple in Jerusalem, the devil makes this suggestion: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you.'"**

What a crazy, outlandish, show-off kind of thing to do!

I wonder what the devil would offer to us, to me even, to show how much faith I had. Hmm, for example, I often think it would be so wonderful to have the kind of energy and drive and stamina that I had some years ago.

So, could the devil come up with a plan to outright re-program my body to be years younger? Quite possibly, he's a sneaky sort. But how would I respond? Would I want a bargain where the devil is in charge? Be beholden to the devil? Could I trust him? No, no, and NO!

Jesus responded by quoting from the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, verse 16, saying "It is written, do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Jesus, 3 and the devil, 0.

But the devil is never done with his dirty work. As we read in the final verse 13 of the reporting in Luke, "When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him *until an opportune time*."

Let's Pray: *Be with and bless me, guide and protect me with your love, with your strength, and with your wisdom, O Lord.*



Thursday, March 10, 2022

Commemoration:

HARRIET TUBMAN (March 1822 - March 10, 1913), Renewer of society.

Bible verse: Galatians 3:28

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

March 10th is national Harriet Tubman Day. It became a national holiday in 1990 when Congress voted to honor the woman who led hundreds of slaves to freedom and served as the "conductor" of the Underground Railway.

Harriet Tubman was born a slave, with the name Armintha Ross, in Dorchester County, Maryland in 1822. She married John Tubman, a free black man, in about 1844. She escaped from slavery in 1849 and went on to help more than 300 slaves make their way to freedom.

She was in her 90's when she died, and is buried in Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn, NY. Harriet Tubman has been called the "Moses of her People". She also served as a nurse, scout and spy during the Civil War.

Two national parks have been named in her honor: the Underground Railroad National Park in Church Creek, Maryland, and the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in Auburn, NY.

Let's Pray: *Thank you for the life and life-saving deeds of Harriet Tubman. May we be so brave as to serve others in light of danger. Amen.*



Friday, March 11, 2022

Commemoration:

SOJOURNER TRUTH (1797 - 1883 in Battle Creek, MI), Renewer of society.

Bible verses: John 14:16-17

¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

We commemorate Sojourner Truth along with Harriet Tubman on the same day, March 10th, as both were very involved with the abolition of slavery.

Born to slave parents in New York, Isabella Baumfree escaped from slavery as an adult. She felt called to be a preacher, and changed her name to Sojourner because, as she said, "I was to travel up and down the land." And she chose the name Truth, "Because I was to declare the Truth unto the people."

Sojourner Truth was an abolitionist. She spoke eloquently about civil rights and temperance and faith in God. She was invited to speak at the Women's Rights Convention in 1851 in Akron, Ohio, and she met with President Lincoln in 1864.

Let's Pray: *We thank you for the life and activities of Sojourner Truth. May we follow her example in speaking out on behalf of the rights of all people. Amen.*



Saturday, March 12, 2022

Commemoration:

GREGORY THE GREAT (c. 540 - March 12, 604), Bishop of Rome (Pope)

Bible Verses: Titus 1:7-8

⁷For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled.

Member of a wealthy family, Gregory was a reluctant chief administrator of Rome for a few years. He gave this up to become a monk, establishing a monastery dedicated to St Andrew on family property in Rome. Fifteen years later, on September 3, 590, he was elected Pope (Bishop of Rome), holding that position for the next 14 years until his death on March 12, 604.

He earned the title Gregory the Great from his writings and the steadfast guidance he exhibited in his office. Eight hundred letters are credited to him. Among other volumes, he wrote a commentary on the book of Job called "Moralia on Job". He wrote "Pastoral Rule" which focused on the bishops and how they could exemplify Christian conduct. Both were full of practical wisdom for Christians.

We remember Gregorian chant, named after him, also called "plainsong", which is a form of chant in which the melody is free form (I.e., Not restricted to 3/4- or 4/4-time signatures) and monophonic (I.e. No harmony), there is no precise rhythm, and it is generally sung by male choirs. As I think about chanting, I can hear it reverberating in large stone churches as a line of monks sing together and move about the high-ceilinged space.

Let's Pray: *Thank you, Lord, for the life and leadership of Pope Gregory. May we, too, be steadfast in our practice of Christian virtues. Amen.*

