

# *Gratitude Foundation*

---



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

## **The First Sunday of Lent — Year C**

---

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret  
Executive Director

[www.gratitudefoundation.us](http://www.gratitudefoundation.us)  
[frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us](mailto:frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us)

3713 County 416 20th Road  
Gladstone, MI 49837

*“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”*

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# First Sunday of Lent - C

## Reading I

### Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Moses spoke to the people, saying:

“The priest shall receive the basket from you  
and shall set it in front of the altar of the LORD, your God.

Then you shall declare before the Lord, your God,

‘My father was a wandering Aramean  
who went down to Egypt with a small household  
and lived there as an alien.

But there he became a nation  
great, strong, and numerous.

When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us,  
imposing hard labor upon us,

we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers,  
and he heard our cry

and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.

He brought us out of Egypt

with his strong hand and outstretched arm,

with terrifying power, with signs and wonders;

and bringing us into this country,

he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey.

Therefore, I have now brought you the firstfruits  
of the products of the soil

which you, O LORD, have given me.’

And having set them before the LORD, your God,  
you shall bow down in his presence.”

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

R. (cf. 15b) **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,

who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,

say to the LORD, “My refuge and fortress,

my God in whom I trust.”

R. **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

No evil shall befall you,

nor shall affliction come near your tent,

For to his angels he has given command about you,

that they guard you in all your ways.

R. **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

Upon their hands they shall bear you up,  
    lest you dash your foot against a stone.  
You shall tread upon the asp and the viper;  
    you shall trample down the lion and the dragon.  
**R. Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

Because he clings to me, I will deliver him;  
    I will set him on high because he acknowledges my name.  
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;  
    I will be with him in distress;  
I will deliver him and glorify him.  
**R. Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

## **Reading II**

### **Romans 10:8-13**

Brothers and sisters:

What does Scripture say?

*The word is near you,*

*in your mouth and in your heart*

—that is, the word of faith that we preach—,  
for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord  
and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,  
you will be saved.

For one believes with the heart and so is justified,  
and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

For the Scripture says,

*No one who believes in him will be put to shame.*

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek;  
the same Lord is Lord of all,  
enriching all who call upon him.

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

## **Verse Before the Gospel**

### **Matthew 4:4b**

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

# Gospel

## Luke 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.

The devil said to him,  
“If you are the Son of God,  
command this stone to become bread.”

Jesus answered him,  
“It is written, *One does not live on bread alone.*”

Then he took him up and showed him  
all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.

The devil said to him,  
“I shall give to you all this power and glory;  
for it has been handed over to me,  
and I may give it to whomever I wish.  
All this will be yours, if you worship me.”

Jesus said to him in reply,

“It is written:

*You shall worship the Lord, your God,  
and him alone shall you serve.*”

Then he led him to Jerusalem,  
made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him,

“If you are the Son of God,  
throw yourself down from here, for it is written:

*He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,*

and:

*With their hands they will support you,  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.*”

Jesus said to him in reply,

“It also says,

*You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*”

When the devil had finished every temptation,  
he departed from him for a time.

# Exegesis

## Deuteronomy 26:4-10

The events described in the *Book of Deuteronomy* all take place on the plains of Moab. This entire period lasted approximately forty days. The noted events occur at the end of the forty-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Israelites are now across the Jordan and are about to enter the Palestine area. It is near the end of Moses' life. Our pericope immediately proceeds the concluding section of *Deuteronomy* which is titled *The Final Words of Moses*.

Our passage is titled *Thanksgiving for the Harvest*. It begins as follows: "When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, chooses for the dwelling place of His name. There you shall go to the priest in office at the time and say to him, 'Today I acknowledge to the Lord, my God, that I have indeed come into the land which he swore to our fathers he would give us.'" (Deut 26: 1-3).

The verses that follow our pericope concludes Chapter 26 in a section titled *The Covenant*. A section of it reads as follows: "This day the Lord, your God, commands you to observe these statutes and decrees. Be careful then to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul... And today the Lord is making this agreement with you; you are to be a people peculiarly His own, as He promised you..." (Deut 26: 16, 18). There is a recurring phrase throughout this chapter, i.e., *the Lord, my God*. Note the personal nature of this covenantal relationship with God. This personal relationship and the personal gifts that flow from God elicit a personal response of gratitude.

There is an acknowledgment of the powerful hand of this personal God who delivered them from slavery and oppression in Egypt, who guided and protected them, who fed them with manna and quail on the journey, who provided life-giving water from the rock in the desert, and who now has brought them to the threshold of the Promised Land. In anticipation of the eventual first fruits of this fertile land flowing with milk and honey they are to promise to give back to God in thanksgiving and praise with the first fruits of their harvest. This is obviously the foundation of the *tithing* tradition of the faith.

The intent of this gift to God (who has no need of our meager gifts) is to express our gratitude to God and to support the most vulnerable of God's children, e.g.: "You have given them to the Levite (see Deut 14: 28), the alien, the orphan, and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your own community. (Deut 26: 12). Thus, love of God and love of neighbor become one.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

Psalm 91 consists of sixteen verses and is titled *Security Under God's Power*. Verse 16 concludes the Psalm as follows: "With the length of days I will satisfy them and show them my salvation." (Ps 91: 16). The Hebrew word translated as *salvation* and in some translations as *saving power* is *Yeshua*. This is the word translated as *Jesus, i.e., God Saves*.

Psalm 91 is filled with words describing the saving power of God, e.g., shelter, refuge, fortress, rescue, protecting shield, stronghold, support, and finally saving power.

Psalm 91 is a powerful song of trust in God. It is not only a recognition of protection from enemies, e.g., "the arrow that flies by day," but also protection from evil, articulated as plague and pestilence. Protection from evil is also clearly expressed in verse ten as well: "No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent." In addition, the psalmist speaks of God's power to assist us in our fight against evil, e.g., "You shall tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon." (Ps 91:13). All the above creatures are ancient symbols of evil.

*For to his angels, he has given command about you, that they guard you in all your ways. Upon their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.* Satan directly quotes this passage in the temptation of Jesus scene in both Matthew and Luke's Gospels. (Mt 4:6, Lk 4:10-11). Two similar passages are found in scripture. The first passage is from Hebrews: "But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool?' Are they not all ministering spirit sent to serve? (Hb 1:14). The second passage is from Proverbs: "Then you may go your way securely; your foot will never stumble. (Prov 3:23). Imagine Satan quoting Sacred Scripture?

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Romans 10:8-13

In our pericope St. Paul is addressing the debate among Jews and Gentiles concerning adherence to Jewish laws and regulations and the necessity of faith in Christ. Many Jews were afraid to accept Christ as the Messiah. To accept Christ was a dangerous move in first century Palestine. To some orthodox Jews it was seen as a betrayal of the faith. There was also fear of Roman retaliation against Christians, and rightfully so. The Romans tolerated Jewish religious practice but saw Christianity as a threat to their power and political position. To profess Christ as Lord and Savior was a perilous thing in terms of worldly pursuits, yet it was necessary for salvation.

St. Paul saw this controversy as a great obstacle to salvation. “They stumbled over the stone that causes stumbling, as it is written: ‘Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion that will make people stumble and a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.’” (Rom 9: 32-33). St. Paul is quoting from Isaiah 28:16 in the previous passage. It is a quotation that St. Peter will use as well in 1 Peter 2:6-8.

St. Paul states his intentions clearly in the first verse of Chapter 10: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God on their behalf is for salvation.” Then he sums up the answer to the discord in verse four: “For Christ is the end of the law for the justification of everyone who has faith.” Jesus, Himself, said that He was the end of the law in that He was the fulfillment of the Law. The Law cannot be correctly understood apart from Him.

*No one who believes in Him will be put to shame.* Again St. Paul quotes from Isaiah.28:16. Paul goes on to express his overarching theme of the universal call to salvation: “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Gentile); the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon Him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” St. Paul is quoting from the Prophet Joel: “Then everyone will be rescued who calls upon the name of the Lord.” (Joel 3:5).

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Luke 4:1-13

At His baptism which immediately precedes the temptation scene we are told that heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, “And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Lk 3: 22). In this great theophany Jesus is revealed clearly as the Son of God. God is speaking directly to Jesus. Now Jesus full of the Holy Spirit is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tested by Satan. It is noteworthy that Satan begins his testing of Jesus by twice saying, “If you are the Son of God.” The clarity of Jesus’ true identity is being questioned and challenged by Satan. Satan knows that Jesus is the Son of God. Even his lowly demons know who Jesus is, they are the first to profess that Jesus is the Holy One of God. The first test that Jesus must face is His own identity as God’s beloved Son. It is precisely in the face of severe testing that Jesus clearly defines Himself as the Son of God.

Jesus is now full of the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit. Although St. Luke portrays the Holy Spirit in a prominent role throughout his Gospel and throughout Acts, the precise expression *full of the Holy Spirit* appears only here and twice in Acts. The first passage in Acts is referring to Stephen: “But he (Stephen) *full of the Holy Spirit*, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55). The second passage in Acts is speaking of Barnabas: “He was a good man *full of the Holy Spirit* and faith.” (Acts 11: 24). Barnabas was at the Church in Antioch that was scattered by the persecution of Stephen. All three men, Jesus, Stephen, and Barnabas were all experiencing testing and duress.

Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke does not mention angels coming to minister to Jesus. Later, on the Mount of Olives, as Jesus is tested again by Satan an angel will come and strengthen Him. (See Lk 22: 43-44).

The Greek word that we translate as *tempted* or *tested* is *peirazō*. It is the same Greek word that was used to describe the fire tempering of metal. In that process the impurities are burned off and the molecules in the cooling process re-align to make the metal stronger and purer. Jesus comes out of this experience focused and His face is “set like flint” on Jerusalem, on the Cross.

The Greek word *peirazō* is used in the LXX for the testing of the people by Yahweh in the wilderness, and their testing of Him (e.g. Exod 16:4; 17:2; Deut 8:2; Ps 94:9 [LXX])<sup>1</sup>.

*By the devil.* Luke uses the word *diabolos* for *devil* as does Matthew. Mark uses *satanas* in his temptation narrative. *Satanas* means tester or accuser as applied in the *Book of Job*. *Diabolos* means divider or prince of discord. Luke uses both *satanas* and *diabolos* throughout Luke and Acts. He also uses *beelzeboul* (lord of the flies). (See Lk 11: 15, 18, 19).

From the Cross Jesus will again be tested, again questioning His true identity; “If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.” (Lk 23: 37). Again, Jesus’ identity is questioned by one of the criminals crucified next to Him: “Are you not the Messiah? Save Yourself and us.” (Lk 23: 39). This time Jesus will leap into the arms of the Father: “Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit.” (Lk 23: 46). It is from the Cross that Jesus’ true identity as the Son of God becomes definitive.

---

1. Johnson, Harrington; Sacra Pagina Series—The Gospel of Luke; L.P.; Colledgeville, MN; page 72.



## Reflection

This weekend's Gospel scene takes place immediately after the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. The Gospel begins: "Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert." (Lk 4:1) Obviously, this is the Father's plan for Jesus as He is about to begin His public life and ministry. The purpose we are told is to be tempted or tested by the devil.

The desert is a place to travel through, to experience, but not a place to live. There are not many creatures that can survive for any length of time in the desert. There are not many distractions either, so it is a good place to commune with oneself and with God. Time in the desert is often an allegory for the very experience of God. Jesus finds Himself face to face with the devil and is tested.

Mounds of commentary has been written about the three temptations that the devil confronts Jesus with. The first is to turn the stones on the desert floor into bread to feed His hungry body. This would seem to represent the natural desire that we all have for sensual pleasure. This desire in and of itself is not bad. The hunger pains that we experience motivate us to feed our bodies with food to nourish and sustain us. When food, or drink, or sensual pleasure becomes a distraction or an escape from God and from life, then they become problematic. When they detract us from fulfilling the real hunger for God then they become evil.

The second and third temptations are very closely related in that they involve the natural human desire for power and glory. They represent the deepest longing of our fallen human nature to feed our inner ego. It is about self-serving love and pride that is the root of all evil and results in emptiness and ultimately eternal death.

When Jesus entered the Jordan River He entered solidarity with us, He became one of us in all things but sin. In the forty days of intense testing Jesus experiences with us the desires of our fallen human nature. He is now truly in a deep solidarity with us. It recalls the scene of the devil testing Adam and Eve in the Garden. While Adam and Eve will fail, Jesus will not. In this time of testing Jesus turns away from the devil and turns toward His Father. In the final test Jesus is on the parapet of the Temple facing the world and the devil. As He turned away from the devil, He would have seen the Cross on the Hill of Calvary that was always there, and that is the road the Jesus took.

The Greek word that we translate as "tempted" or "tested" is the same word that was used to describe the fire tempering of metal. In that process the impurities are burned off and the molecules re-align in the cooling off process to make the metal stronger and purer. Jesus comes out of this experience focused and His face is "set like flint" on Jerusalem, on the Cross. Lent is a time for all of us to focus with Jesus on what is important, aligning ourselves with God's will and walking with Him to Calvary and beyond.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

## Personal Witness

During my life as a priest and as an active Catholic layperson before my ordination. I have been blessed to know many Spirit filled people. As I grew spiritually and allowed the Holy Spirit increasingly into my life I discovered an interesting phenomena. I would meet a Spiritual person as a first-time encounter, and I felt that I had known that person my entire life. There is something extremely profound in sharing the same Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Sharing in the One Spirit unites us as the Body of Christ. It unites us in a common mission toward a common destination, eternal life with Christ.

Growth in the Spiritual life provides heightened awareness of God's grace working in the world. Life in the Spirit allows one to see the movement of the Spirit and the hand of God in everyday life. With it comes a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. In a way it is like seeing life through the eyes of God. St. Paul said it best when he said, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."

Along with the heightened sense of God comes an increased awareness of evil in the world all around us. Just as our first parents, Adam and Eve, were confronted with Satan in the Garden of Eden, Jesus is confronted with Satan as He begins His public ministry. At His Baptism Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and then immediately led by that same Spirit into the desert to be challenged by Satan. Moving from the desert into His public ministry He confronted by demons at almost every turn.

As a priest humbly standing in Persona Christi, in the person of Christ, I too found myself seemingly in constant Spiritual battle. I soon discovered that good Spiritual people around me were sharing in the same struggles with evil. I recall so many times that I felt certain that I was losing the battle. For weeks on end, I felt like I had a great leviathan by the tail, and I could not let go for fear being destroyed. It was St. Paul who would remind me that I was trying to fight heavenly powers and principalities with worldly power. That led me to my knees in prayer and led me to seek my Spiritual brothers and sisters to engage with me in the battle. This forged an even deeper solidarity with my spiritual prayer group.

At times I was too engaged in the battle, such that I would loose sight of the mission at hand. Perhaps that is one of Satan's tools to keep us focused on him and not on Christ. The devil wants us either to be too engaged with him or living in the other extreme of denying his existence. I have learned that there must be a healthy balance in this battle. It is important to trust in the power of God. I have learned what I call holy detachment. I pray for guidance with all of my strength, follow the voice of Jesus in my heart with everything that I have and then placing it all in the hands of God. He is in charge! The victory has already been won on the hill of Calvary! The only power that Satan has is the power that we allow him. The key is to allow the Holy Spirit into our hearts to become Spirit filled, Spirit led and Spirit giving people and so we pray, come Holy Spirit fill the heart of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

