

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Which of the temptations that Pope Francis describes do you feel most strongly?
2. What other things hinder you from being joyful and confident about your mission to spread the Good News?
3. Pope Francis is not discouraged but says, 'Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!' [109]
What helps you to be positive in the face of difficulties?
4. How can we encourage and support each other in facing the temptation to leave evangelisation to someone else?

Practical Evangelisation

Could you start up a conversation this week with someone outside the parish community about something Pope Francis has said?

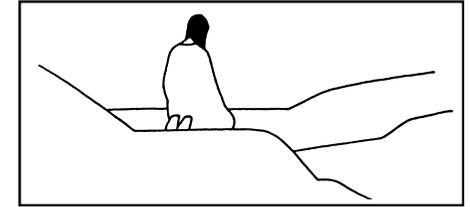
Prayer

Loving God
fill us with hope in the call you give us
to be bearers of good news.
Free us from the temptation not to believe
in your power at work within us
and amongst us.
Free us from trusting in our ways
more than your ways.
Free us from the need to be liked
and admired.
Fill us with a such desire
to proclaim the Good News
that we allow nothing to get in the way
of the invitation we have been given
to be co-workers with Christ.
Amen.



This leaflet was prepared by the Department for Evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Liverpool

The Joy of the Gospel Walking through Lent with Pope Francis



First Sunday of Lent: The Temptations of Jesus

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.

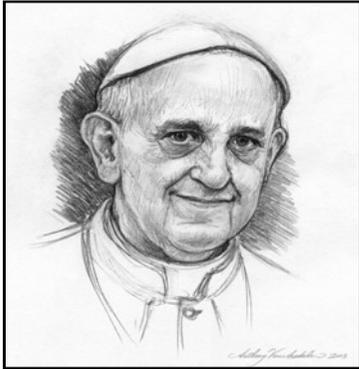
Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus was tempted in three different ways to give up or distort his mission:

- the desire to survive and to consume
- the need to be loved and to be special
- the making of power and wealth into false gods

His relationship with his Father helped him to resist these temptations.

Here are some of the ways Pope Francis says Christians are tempted to give up or distort our mission to spread the Good News.



To ponder: Jesus rejected all the ways he was tempted to make his life easy.

Pope Francis reflects on selfishness and spiritual sloth:

At a time when we most need a missionary dynamism which will bring salt and light to the world, many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time. For example, it

has become very difficult today to find trained parish catechists willing to persevere in this work for some years. Something similar is also happening with priests who are obsessed with protecting their free time. This is frequently due to the fact that people feel an overbearing need to guard their personal freedom, as though the task of evangelization was a dangerous poison rather than a joyful response to God’s love which summons us to mission and makes us fulfilled and productive. [81]

Question: With so many other things to do, are we tempted to shy away from committing ourselves to our mission? What would encourage us?

To ponder: Jesus refused to be discouraged by the forces that opposed him.

Pope Francis reflects on pessimism and defeatism:

One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, “sourpusses”. Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. [85]

The evil spirit of defeatism is brother to the temptation to separate, before its time, the wheat from the weeds; it is the fruit of an anxious and self-centred lack of trust. [85]

Question: How positive are we about our mission to spread the Good News?

To ponder: Jesus resisted the temptation to go it alone and went on to call his disciples to join in his mission of teaching and healing all who came to him.

Pope Francis reflects on isolation:

Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness. [88]

Question: Who are the people we are tempted to avoid? How can we ensure our community is open to all and at the service of all?

To ponder: Jesus was tempted to make himself special, to lord it over others, but chose the path of humility.

Pope Francis reflects on warring among ourselves:

How many wars take place within the people of God and in our different communities! In our neighbourhoods and in the workplace, how many wars are caused by envy and jealousy, even among Christians! Spiritual worldliness leads some Christians to war with other Christians who stand in the way of their quest for power, prestige, pleasure and economic security. Some are even no longer content to live as part of the greater Church community but stoke a spirit of exclusivity, creating an “inner circle”. Instead of belonging to the whole Church in all its rich variety, they belong to this or that group which thinks itself different or special. [98]

Question: Do any groups in our community appear to be exclusive? How can we make clear that God has no favourites?
