

Great Fast

- [2026-03-01: Temptation Sunday](#)
- [2026-03-22: Paralytic Man Sunday](#)

2026-03-01: Temptation Sunday

Background

Good morning, dear beloved

We are celebrating the 2nd Sunday of the Holy and Great Fast, today. This is called the Temptation Sunday.

- 1st Sunday - Treasures Sunday
- 2nd - Temptation Sunday
- 3rd - Prodigal Son
- 4th - Samaritan Woman
- 5th - Paralytic Man
- 6th - Man Born Blind
- 7th - Palm Sunday

The Church arranges these readings for us to give us a complete picture of the Spiritual Life during the Holy and Great Fast.

Introduction

We start the Fast excited, ready to succeed, ready to lay for ourselves Treasures in Heaven. We deactivate our social media, remove the apps from our phone that are taking us away, we change out everything in our fridge, we make big commitments... But within two weeks or so, we start to get hit with Temptations. I'm starting to get hungry. I'm starting to get bored. I'm starting to miss my social media. And of course, boredom leads to sin... we're in Temptation season, but there is very good news!

1 - The Devil is Predictable! He uses the oldest tricks in the book

2 - The Lord Jesus Christ overcame the temptation.

3 - Because of this, we can also overcome Temptation

4 - There is great blessing in enduring temptation.

The Oldest Trick in the Book

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” (James 1:13)

The devil tempted the Lord Jesus with the three categories of Temptation. And these are known to us from the Scripture.

1. Lust of the Flesh

1. "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

2. Lust of the Eyes

1. "All these things I will give to You if You will fall down and worship me."

3. Pride of Life

1. "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

"For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world." (1 John 2:16)

Eve was tempted by the same three categories:

- "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." (Genesis 3:6)

The Lusts of the Flesh

- Any desires for physical things
- Sexual Immorality & Impurity
- Gluttony (excessive eating, drinking, sleeping)
- Laziness and Oversleeping
- Emotions - jealousy, greed, selfishness, lust
- Substances (drugs, alcohol, vaping, marijuana)
- "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like" (Galatians 5:19-21)
- The devil wants to convince us that life is all about food, material and the world.

The Lust of the Eyes

- Love of money
- Possessions
- Envy & Jealousy
- Material attachments
- Greediness
- Cheating
- Stealing
- Self-image

The Pride of Life

- Pride, Arrogance, Ego
- Love of Power and Authority
- Love of knowledge
- Love of strength

- Popularity, Attention, Prestige
- Boasting
- Disobedience to parents, teachers, elders
- Not considering the opinions of others
- Lying

The Lord Jesus Overcame Temptation

- Adam was tempted when he was healthy, strong and happy in the Garden of Eden. He had food to eat, animals to play with, trees everywhere. He was comfortable. He had his wife, Eve. They had no worries.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ was in the wilderness, He was hungry, He was physically weak because of fasting for forty days.
- Both of them were tempted by Satan. But only one of them overcame. Our Lord Jesus Christ. And our Lord Jesus Christ represented the whole humanity. And this story is in the gospels so we can learn from it. He achieved victory on that mountain, but that victory was for all of us, humans.
- “For because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18)
- “For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

How do we Overcome

- Sacramental Life
 - Confess Often
 - The nail?
 - Receive Eucharist weekly
 - Some people say "I only need to come once a month" or "every other week."
 - The Eucharist gives me strength throughout the week to overcome temptation
 - This is why during COVID when we went many weeks without receiving the Eucharist, many fell into sin - new sins, new passions, new addictions. But let me come every week and receive the Body and Blood of Christ. The only one who doesn't want you to take communion is the devil, so if you think of any reason I don't need to come every week, then you are being deceived. That, in itself, is a temptation.
- Spiritual Disciplines
 - Fasting, Prayer, Reading Scripture, Prostrations
 - “Strive with all your might to bring your interior activity into accord with God, and you will overcome exterior passions.” – Abba Arsenius
 - “Fasts and vigils, the study of Scripture, renouncing possessions and everything worldly are not in themselves perfection, as we have said; they are its tools. For perfection is not found in them; it is acquired through them.” – St John Cassian
 - Fasting and Prayer cast out demons
 - Fasting helps us to develop self-control over the lusts of the flesh.

- Scripture - The Lord Jesus responded to Satan with Scripture in every temptation - how beautiful is that! That if I am tempted, and I know the Scripture and I keep the Scripture in my heart and in the front of my mind, I will be able to overcome temptation.
- PARENTS - pray with your children, making fasting food for them, read the Scripture with your children, teach them the spiritual disciplines. This is something they CANNOT learn at church, but they have to learn at home. Because no matter what they learn in Sunday School or in Liturgy, unless they see that mom and dad are practicing, it will not make a difference.
- Consuming Spiritual Content
 - Spiritual Books, Sermons, Hymns and Spiritual Songs
 - What kind of content do I watch, listen to, read, etc.?
 - What comes in, goes out...
 - Many of our youth are struggling with using bad language - and they say "it just slips out." what kind of videos do you watch? The more I watch videos with language not befitting me as a Christian, the more I accustom my mind to that kind of language. Garbage in, garbage out.
 - Some are suffering from bad dreams - what kind of videos do you watch? Dreams are just a combination of what I saw, heard, thought and experienced that day. Garbage in, garbage out.
 - Instead, let me fill my mind and my senses with that which is holy - with reading Spiritual Books, with listening to sermons or spiritual lectures, with hearing hymns and spiritual songs. When I am filled with the stories of the saints, the words of the Scripture, the lessons of the fathers, the tunes of the Church - holiness in, holiness out!
- Remove Temptation
 - We always pray to God to "lead us not into temptation" but we put ourselves in temptation
 - If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:29-30)
 - If an app on your phone causes you to sin, remove it. Uninstall it.
 - If your internet causes you to sin, use the internet at the library
 - If your computer causes you to sin, put it in the living room
 - If staying up late causes you to sin, give yourself a bedtime and commit to it
 - If your phone causes you to sin, get a dumb phone
 - Imagine this, that the thing that causes me to sin the most in my life, I keep it in my hand at all times. "Claw hand" Or if it's not in my hand, it's in my pocket. Or if it's not in my hand or my pocket, I am panicking because I think I lost it.
 - "Lord, lead us not into temptation" - but I am keeping temptation within a few inches of my body at all times.
 - What kind of places do I go to?
 - Many young men go to the gym - and it's good to exercise and to train your body. But what kind of sights are my eyes seeing at the gym? What are the

girls at the gym wearing and where do my eyes go? If this is a temptation for me, the best thing that I can do is to stop going to the gym. Or stop going to that gym. Exercise at home. Buy some weights to use in my home.

- Why do I put myself in temptation?
- "Lord, lead us not into temptation" - but I am scheduling temptation and putting it on my calendar.
- PARENTS - remove temptation from your children. Many parents are giving their children tablets and phones and leaving them unmonitored. Some parents are giving their child an iPad and putting a time limit on it - 30min per day. That's a good start, but I need to know what my kids are doing on it.
 - MANY of our children in elementary are telling us that they watch YouTube Shorts. This is so dangerous for them
 - When you watch a YouTube video, you search for it or you search a certain topic, you see the thumbnail, the title, the channel name, you decide to watch it and you watch it. When you're watching YouTube shorts, whatever comes, comes. Whatever is the next video is the next one.
 - And our children say "if I hear a bad word, I swipe to the next one" - "If I see a bad image, I swipe to the next one." - okay... but you already heard the bad word. You already saw the image. It entered your mind and your thoughts.
 - We are putting our children in Temptation - besides also the fact that YouTube shorts is physically unhealthy: destroying attention span, impairing memory, ability to focus, etc. and socially unhealthy.
 - Let me remove temptation from my life, and as a parent, I HAVE TO remove temptation from my child's life.
 - "Flee also youthful lusts"
- Obedience & Seeking Guidance
 - This is the remedy for Pride
 - Let me seek guidance often - talk to your spouse, talk to your parents, talk to Abouna, talk to a friend who is spiritually mature and full of wisdom.
 - Whenever I seek guidance, I am humbling myself. I am admitting my insufficiency.
 - "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 11:14)
 - "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise." (Proverbs 12:15)
 - "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17)
 - Sometimes children think their parents are "out to get them"
 - Sometimes youth think the servants are "out to get them"
 - Sometimes I might even think Abouna is "out to get me" or Abouna is "so strict on me" - my beloved, your parents and servants and Abouna are watching out for your soul. They will give account for your soul. They want you to be the best. They want you to grow. They see things you don't see. They already went through what you're going through.
 - And the Scripture tells us - "Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for YOU"

The Blessing of Enduring Temptation

- Gold
 - Usually when you have something made of gold, it's actually just a certain percentage of gold mixed with other metals like silver, copper, nickel. And that determines how many karats it is. But then when you want to purify gold, you have to heat it with fire to a very high temperature... about 2000 degrees F. And when it gets that hot, it turns into a liquid, and the other metals that are in it can be removed. So it becomes purer gold and more karats. Until you have 24kt gold which is almost 100% purified. But it can't be purified except by fire. Except by melting and being molded again.
 - St Peter compares the genuineness of our faith to gold. And says it is more precious than gold, and like gold it is tested by fire.
 - "That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7)
 - Enduring temptation is this test by fire.
- Without humiliation, I cannot practice humility
 - I heard before - I am very humble, but when someone is being unfair, I can't be humble I have to step up. Okay... but how can I know that I am humble unless I have the chance to react to someone being unfair to me? The test of my humility is when I am humiliated! And I have the chance to react! This is a test by fire! And without this test, I don't have a way to express my humility to the Lord. And without this test, the Lord doesn't have a way to show me my LACK of humility.
- The same with other temptations.
 - Without hunger, and the temptation to eat, I cannot practice self-control
 - Without suffering, and the temptation to give up, I cannot practice endurance
 - Without criticism, and the temptation to talk back, I cannot practice meekness
 - Without being misunderstood, I cannot practice silence
 - Without weakness, I cannot rely on God's strength
 - Without fear, I cannot practice courage
 - Without inconvenience, I cannot practice sacrifice
 - Without enemies and people who hate me, I cannot practice forgiveness
- Parents:
 - Without a disobedient child, I cannot practice patience
 - Without some spicing with my spouse, I cannot practice unconditional love
 - Without annoying co-workers, or classmates, I cannot practice gentleness and avoiding judgment
 - Without traffic, I can't practice calmness and peace
- Even in the spiritual life:
 - Without some boredom in prayer, I cannot learn faithfulness
 - Without falling, I cannot learn repentance
 - Without struggling with some doubts, I cannot grow in faith
 - To sum up, without being wronged and falsely accused, and beaten and crucified, I cannot become like Christ

- Enduring temptation shows me where I need improvement, and gives me a chance to express my love to the Lord

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

2026-03-22: Paralytic Man

Sunday

Background

The Great Fast takes us on a journey of repentance. Of course, repentance is part of our life as Christians throughout the whole year, but the Great Fast is a chance to focus more on repentance. So what does this journey of repentance look like?

1. **Treasures:** Life of Repentance to inherit the treasures in heaven. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things on earth will be added to you.
2. **Temptation:** Satan, while we are on this journey, will tempt us with the three things: The Lust of the Eyes, the Lust of the Flesh, the Pride of Life. He wants us to fall into sin - but the message is that as the Lord Jesus overcame, so we, too, can defeat and overcome him in Christ.
3. Then, the next three weeks show us three examples of repentance, and three steps of repentance
 - **Type of Sin**
 - **Prodigal Son:** Lust of the Eyes
 - **Samaritan Woman:** Lust of the Flesh
 - **Paralytic Man:** Pride of Life
 - **Severity**
 - **Prodigal Son:** Fell once and returned and was accepted
 - **Samaritan Woman:** Fell six times and returned and was accepted
 - **Paralytic Man:** Lying in his sin for 38 years... for his whole life... and was accepted.
 - **Response**
 - **Prodigal Son:** Coming to yourself and returning to God
 - **Samaritan Woman:** Confession
 - **Paralytic Man:** Walking with God
4. **Man Born Blind:** Finally, next week we will see in the Sunday of Illumination, which is the fruit of repentance and baptism - that we who were in darkness will come to light.

Introduction

In this gospel, the Lord Jesus said three statements: He asked the paralytic: "Do you want to be made well?" and then He told him "Rise, take up your bed and walk" and then when He found him in the temple He said "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

We will very briefly take these three statements

Do you want to be made well?

We might think this is obvious... of course he wants to be made well! But unfortunately, if I take this question to myself - I might be surprised with the answer.

The Lord is asking me this question every day - do you want to be made well?

Whenever someone asks "how do I overcome this sin" the answer is always the same... fasting, prayer, reading the Bible, attend the Liturgy, do prostrations, participate in the Midnight Praises, confess. And sometimes, I am like the rich young ruler who heard what the Lord told him "if you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor" and he went away sorrowful.

Sometimes, I don't want to be made well. I don't say no, but I make excuses...

Comfort and Habits

- I don't have time to pray before bed... but I can scroll on my phone for an hour as I fall asleep
- I don't have time to read the Scripture... but I am finishing shows every other week
- Purity is nice... but I like the movies and shows that I am watching
- Vespers on Saturday night? That's when we hang out with our friends
- Fasting on Wednesday and Friday? I need protein
- I am too comfortable in this job that is taking me to the places of sin... it's a secure job and it makes a lot of money
- Yes, I want to be made well... but not at the expense of my comfort, not at the expense of my habits!

Relationships

- Sure, I could be better... but I am satisfied with these friends. I can't give up my friends!
- I know this relationship is unhealthy... but I won't let go

Laziness

- I would love to pray... but I cannot wake up early in the morning, I need my sleep
- I am coming to liturgy... but my mind is somewhere else
- Liturgy on Sunday? But Sunday is my only day off!
- Yes, I want to be made well... but I don't want to put any effort!

Excuses

- Life is too hectic right now... when it slows down.
- I am too busy right now... I will come when I am less busy.
- I can't change, this is how I am
- I can't repent, temptation is too strong
- Yes, I want to be made well... but it's not up to me!

To be made well, I need to first have the desire to be made well and to be healed. And I need to understand that I will have to let go of some things... I will have to put effort, I will have to be uncomfortable!

I don't think any of us would say "no" to Christ... but sometimes we say "not yet" or "not like that" or "not that much."

Rise, take up your bed and walk

But when I say yes! Yes, Lord, I want to be made well. Then I hear the next statement: Rise, Take up your bed, walk. And these are three commands:

Rise

- St Augustine says that when the Lord said Rise, this was the healing command. At this word, the paralytic was healed... and then the other two commands were for the man.
 - Rise from death. Rise from darkness. Rise from sin.
 - "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you life." (Ephesians 5:14)
 - Let go of the sin. Let go of the habits. Let go of the laziness.
 - Trust in God's grace - the Lord is saying to you "Rise." You can overcome.
- The hardest moment in sin is not after it, it's not during it, but it's that moment right before it. When the flesh wills it and the spirit does not, and that's the moment of war between the flesh and the spirit. Focus on that moment...
 - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)
 - When the phone is pulling me to it... put it down
 - When a thought comes... reject it
 - When anger is rising... take a moment in silence before speaking
 - When I hear in my mind the word "later..." start immediately!
 - "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)
- And in that moment, trust in the name of the Lord and call upon His name... My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.
- When the Lord said "Rise" it was immediate... so let me act with immediacy.

Take up your bed

- Get out of your comfort zone. The bed is the comfort zone... I could lay in bed all day and I would be comfortable. No, take up your bed.
 - Take away those things that you are comfortable with.
 - Take away those things that have become habits.
 - Take away the sources of sin...
 - Uninstall the app
 - Unsubscribe
 - Set screen time limits
 - Make a commitment - no phone in the bedroom
 - Find new friends
 - Throw away the vape

- "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out" (Matthew 5:29)
- "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14)
- "Lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us." (Hebrews 12:1)
 - The bed is a weight... when I wake up in the morning and I feel heavy and I feel I can't get up, this is a weight. Lay aside this weight and the sin which ensnares us.

Walk

- The Life of Repentance is not a moment or an action... it's a life of moments and actions. It's a way of life. It's a walk
- Every morning we pray "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." - The Church starts every morning with this reminder... we are called to walk.
- "We also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)
- "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25)
 - Bear the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control
- Walk in the Spiritual Life
 - Read the Scripture
 - Stand in prayer
 - Be attentive in the Liturgy
- Walk behind someone... in discipleship
 - Your Father of Confession will advise you

Sin No More

- Don't go back! Don't return to the place that Christ delivered you from
- St Peter in his epistle writes that when we do that, we are like "A dog returns to his own vomit"
- And sin no more is not a matter of will - I can't just decide "okay I will sin no more." But it requires taking action... Let me give myself the best chance to sin no more
- If I removed bad habits, I need to replace them with good habits or else I will fall again
 - Someone who is trying to overcome smoking, cannot just stop and that's it... but for example, they might use sour candy to try and curb the desire when it comes.
 - Pick up a hobby - sinless leisure activity
 - Parents - support your children in this. Give them alternatives to screen time and scrolling and games... play with them. Take them to the park. Do activities and crafts with them. Give them a chance to play sports.
- Let me persist in the life of repentance and confession...
 - Someone says "Whenever I confess this sin, I go about one week without doing it again, and then I fall."
 - Okay... so confess more often!
 - Maybe you will confess and you will go about one week. Then confess again and you will go eight days. Confess again and you will go nine days.
 - This is growth! This is "Sin no more."

- It doesn't mean that I will never sin again, but it means I will persist in my life of repentance and confession
- “The righteous falls seven times and rises again.” (Proverbs 24:16)

Conclusion

Do you want to be made well? This is your will.

Rise, take up your bed and walk. This is your action.

Sin no more. This is your life.