

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)

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