

## REFLECTING ON SUNDAY'S GOSPEL



As we enter into this Lenten season of penance and self-denial, we're reminded that the God we follow is no stranger to these things. In this Sunday's Gospel, we see the temptations of Jesus which have parallels throughout Scripture and in our own lives. The apostle John warns against temptations to sensual lust, enticement of the eyes, and a pretentious life (cf. 1 John 2:16). Before Eve plucks the fruit from the tree, she hears it is good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom (cf. Genesis 3:6). The temptations of Jesus are our own.

"Turn these stones to bread." Here is the lure of bodily comfort, like good food or sensual lust. It's the simplest of temptations because it's instinctual. We want good for our bodies! But there may be times these bodily goods don't serve the higher good for our souls. The leap "from the temple parapet" would entice the eye of the person watching. A feat like this would prove Jesus' Messianic ability. His popularity could be a shortcut to the cross. We might not be daredevils, but we want people to like us and be impressed by us. Do we sacrifice our values along the way? To "bow and worship" the devil—and so claim power and a pretentious life—seems like a dramatic temptation. Not everyone may feel enticed by power in the professional sense, but all of us want control. A volunteer team can feel just as intense as the boardroom! How often do we prefer to be in control of our lives (and perhaps even the lives of others), rather than allow God to be God?

When we consider areas of temptation and sin, it's not to feel ashamed. The temptation in the desert reminds us that we are not alone and that the strength of Jesus can be our strength, too.