

Meditation 2014-03-09
The First Sunday Of Lent
Meditation Theme: “Just Who Is Jesus?”

Place yourself in the presence of Jesus Christ. Make sure He knows that every thought, action, and experience of today is dedicated exclusively to Him.

The Scenario: From the Gospel of today’s Mass

AT that time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him: If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written: That He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, And said to Him: All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left Him; and behold angels came and ministered to Him.

Point 1. – Jesus was approached by the devil only after He had spent forty days and nights in prayer and fasting.

Point 2. – Jesus was tempted in three ways. The first was a temptation of the appetites. The second was a temptation of pride, to “show us what You can do!” The third was a temptation of avarice. At no time did the devil lie or misrepresent what he said. Jesus did not rebuke him for this.

Point 3. – The Church Fathers speculate that perhaps the devil did not know who Jesus was, beyond the fact that He was specially sent from God. If he did not know beforehand and was trying to find out, he was certainly told by Jesus.

Meditation: The man Jesus subjected Himself to some rather rigorous penance. Why? He would have no need for it! He would not increase in holiness by it. He did not earn Himself a higher place in heaven. But He did give us, His human brothers, an example of what is good to do.

Do I do penance frequently? Only occasionally? Not at all? And if I do something penitential, do I do it for a price? If I voluntarily suffer in penance, do I expect to be repaid? Does God owe me anything? Do I as much as say “Dear God, I think You owe me something for this!” If there is any spiritual value in my penances, should I hope that God applies it to perhaps lessen the debt that I owe Him for having paid the price of my redemption?

Am I the sum total of my appetites? Do I only seek to “scratch an itch?” Does bread help me to avoid sin? Does it increase my spiritual ardor? Does it magnify any virtue? God has told me that He will provide my daily bread, even if I spend little or no time worrying about it. Do I worry about material needs? Does worrying help?

Do I take pride in what I can do? If I can do things well, does the ability come from me? From where, or rather, from whom do my talents come? If I could fling myself from the pinnacle of the temple, knowing that angels would save me from injury, does that mean that I should? Would that be any more than showing off? Would it bring an increase in sanctity? Would it make me more virtuous?

If I were offered fame and fortune for the price of my soul, would I accept it? Would it be a good or a bad bargain? Jesus did not deny that the devil had the power to deliver all of the kingdoms of the world. Do I understand that the devil controls all of it? Do I understand that if I want it, I have to play by his rules? Would it be best if I tried my best to not want it? How can I arrive at that point? Would it be easy to simply “stop wanting things?” Or would it require work and effort? Do I have the strength for this? Will God lend me the strength? Do I have to ask?

Colloquy: Take a minute or two to converse with God, in any of His three Persons, or the Triune God complete in Himself. Tell Him what you have learned from your meditation, and thank Him for it.

Hold the Gain: Consider what you can do to keep the fruits of your meditation. Try to plan how you can think of them through the day, and through the days ahead. Come up with ways you can apply your conclusions to what you do in your everyday life, conversations you engage in, the choice of what movie to watch, what books you choose to read.