

Edmonton

Catholic Latin Mass Community



served by the Priests of the Fraternity of St. Peter (fssp)
for the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton

St. Anthony's Church ♦ 10661 82nd Avenue, Edmonton

Sandro Botticelli, 1481-82, The temptations of Christ, detail, Sistine Chapel



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The Temptations of Christ

Matthew and Luke recount three temptations of Jesus that reflect the inner struggle over his own particular mission and, at the same time, address the question as to what truly matters in human life. At the heart of all the temptations, as we see here, is the act of pushing God aside because we perceive him as secondary, if not actually superfluous and annoying, in comparison with all the apparently far more urgent matters that fill our lives. Constructing a world by our own lights, without reference to God, building our own foundation; refusing to acknowledge the reality of anything beyond the political and material, while setting God aside as an illusion – that is the temptation that threatens us in many varied forms.

Moral posturing is part and parcel of temptation. It does not invite us directly to do evil – no, that would be far too blatant. It pretends to show us a better way, where we finally abandon our illusions and throw ourselves into the work of actually making the world a better place. It claims, moreover, to speak for true realism: What's real is what is right there in front of us – power and bread. By comparison, the things of God fade into unreality, into a secondary world that no one really needs.

God is the issue: Is he real, reality itself, or isn't he? Is he good, or do we have to invent good ourselves? The God question is the fundamental question, and it sets us down right at the crossroads of human existence. What must the Savior of the world do or not do? That is what the temptations of Jesus are all about...

... "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (Mt 4:3) – so the first temptation goes. "If you are the Son of God" – we will hear these words again in the mouths of the mocking bystanders at the foot of the Cross... Mockery and temptation blend into each other here: Christ is being challenged to establish his credibility by offering evidence for his claims. This demand of proof is a constantly reoccurring theme in the story of Jesus' life...

... And we make this same demand of God and Christ and his Church throughout the whole of history. "If you exist, God," we say, "then you'll just have to show yourself..."

... The proof of divinity that the tempter proposes at the first temptation consists in changing the stones of the desert into bread...

... Is there anything more tragic, is there anything more opposed to belief in the existence of a good God and Redeemer of mankind, than world hunger? Shouldn't it be the first test of the Redeemer, before the world's gaze and on the world's behalf, to give it bread and to end all hunger? During their wandering through the desert, God fed the people of Israel with bread from heaven, with manna. This seemed to offer a privileged glimpse into how things would look when the Messiah came: Did not, and does not, the Redeemer of the world have to prove his credentials by feeding everyone? Isn't the problem of feeding the world – and, more generally, are the social problems – the primary, true yardstick by which redemption has to be measured? Does someone who fails to measure up to this standard have any right to be called a redeemer? Marxism – quite understandably – made this very point the core of its promise of salvation: It would see to it that no one went hungry anymore and that the "desert would become bread."

"If you are the Son of God" – what a challenge! And should we not say the same to the Church? If you claim to be the Church of God, then start by making sure the world has bread – the rest comes later. It is hard to answer this challenge, precisely because

the cry of the hungry penetrates so deeply into the ears and into the soul – as well it should. Jesus' answer cannot be understood in the light of the temptation story alone. The bread motif pervades the entire Gospel and has to be looked at in its full breadth.

There are two other great narratives concerning bread in Jesus' life. The first is the multiplication of loaves for the thousands who followed the Lord when he withdrew to a lonely place. Why does Christ now do the very thing he had rejected as a temptation before? The crowds had left everything in order to come hear God's word. They are people who have opened their heart to God and to one another; they are therefore ready to receive the bread with the proper disposition. This miracle of the loaves has three aspects, then. It is preceded by a search for God, for his word, for the teaching that sets the whole of life on the right path. Furthermore, God is asked to supply the bread. Finally, readiness to share with one another is an essential element of the miracle. Listening to God becomes living with God, and leads from faith to love, to the discovery of the other. Jesus is not indifferent toward men's hunger, their bodily needs, but he places these things in the proper content and the proper order.

This second narrative concerning bread thus points ahead to, and prepares for, the third: the Last Supper, which becomes the Eucharist of the Church and Jesus' perpetual miracle of bread. Jesus himself has become the grain of wheat that died and brought forth much fruit (cf. Jn 12:24). He himself has become bread for us, and this multiplication of the loaves endures to the end of time, without ever being depleted. This gives us the background we need if we are to understand what Jesus means when he cites the Old Testaments in order to repel the tempter: "Man does not live by bread alone, but...by everything that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord" (Duet 8:3). The German Jesuit Alfred Delp, who was executed by the Nazis, once wrote: "Bread is important, freedom is more important, but most important of all is unbroken fidelity and faithful adoration."

When this ordering of goods is no longer respected, but turned on its head, the result is not justice or concern for human suffering. The result is rather ruin and destruction even of material goods themselves. When God is regarded as a secondary matter that we can set aside temporarily or permanently on account of more important things, it is precisely these supposedly more important things that come to nothing. It is not just the negative outcome of the Marxist experience that proves this.

The aid offered by the West to developing countries has been purely technical and materially based, and not only has left God out of the picture, but has driven men away from God. And this aid, proudly claiming to "know better," is itself what first turned the "third world" into what mean today by that term. It has thrust aside indigenous religious, ethical, and social structures and filled the resulting vacuum with its technocratic mind-set. The idea was that we could turn stones into bread; instead, our "aid" has only given stones in place of bread. The issue is the primacy of God. The issue is acknowledging that he is a reality, that he is the reality without which nothing else can be good. History cannot be detached from God and then run smoothly on purely material lines. If man's heart is not good, then nothing else can turn out good, either. And the goodness of the human heart can ultimately come only from the One who goodness, who is the Good itself.

Of course, one can still ask why God did not make a world in which his presence is more evident – why Christ did not leave the world with another sign of his presence so radiant that no one could resist it. This is the mystery of God and man, which we find so

inscrutable. We live in this world, where God is not so manifest as tangible things are, but can be sought and found only when the heart sets out on the “exodus” from “Egypt.” It is in the this world that we are obliged to resist the delusions of false philosophies and to recognise that we do not live be bread alone, but first and foremost by obedience to God’s world. Only when this obedience is put into practice does the attitude develop that is also capable of providing bread for all.

Excerpted from Jesus of Nazareth (2007, Ignatius Press), pages 28-34

Announcements

Tax Receipts – are available at the entrance to the Church.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Domenic Morrone, who passed away this week. At her request the funeral Mass will be in Toronto in a parish of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, of which she was a long-time supporter.

Summer Camp - The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter is hosting a two-week, outdoor summer camp for boys ages 13 to 15 years old, at Custer State Park, located an hour south of Rapid City, South Dakota from August 14th to the 26th. The camp will be staffed by one priest and seminarians from the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. Located in the rugged Black Hill mountain range, this camp challenges the spiritual, physical, and mental readiness of the boys in preparation for their roles as Catholic men, both now and in the future. For more information on Camp St. Peter, or if you are interested in sponsoring a boy to attend or contributing to the camp, please visit seminarycamps.wordpress.com.

Together We Serve is the name of the annual charitable appeal in the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton. This appeal, which begins with Lent each year, has replaced the separate special collections that were previously been taken up in parishes at various times throughout the year. This year Catholic Social Services is included in the list of charities that will be supported. For more details about this year’s appeal, see the video message from Archbishop Smith at <https://vimeo.com/119076710>. For more information about the appeal, or to see how each charity benefited from the Together We Serve collection in 2014, visit www.caedm.ca/WeServe.

Sunday 15th February 2015: attendance 109 ♦ general collection \$1,908.00

Weekly Mass Schedule

DAY	DATE	TIME	FEAST DAY
Sunday	22 February	8:00 a.m.	1 st Sunday of Lent (1 st class)
Monday	23 February	No Mass	Chair of St. Peter the Apostle (1 st cl.) <i>Transferred from 22nd in apostolates of the FSSP</i>
Tuesday	24 February	7:30 a.m.	St. Matthias, Apostle (2 nd cl.) <i>Day of Confessions in all parishes</i>
Wednesday	25 February	7:30 a.m.	Ember Wednesday (2 nd cl.)
Thursday	26 February	7:30 a.m.	Feria of Lent (3 rd cl.)
Friday	27 February	6:00 p.m.	Ember Friday (2 nd cl.) <i>Commemoration: St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows</i>
Saturday	1 March	9:00 a.m.	Ember Saturday (2 nd cl.) <i>Confessions: 6:00 p.m. – 7:20 p.m.</i>
Sunday	2 March	8:00 a.m.	1 st Sunday in Lent (1 st cl.)