



## **First Sunday of Lent**

### **Deacon Steve Szmuto's Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

[Reading I: Deuteronomy 26:4-10](#)

[Reading II: Romans 10:8-13](#)

[Gospel: Luke 4:1-13](#)

The Season of Lent has begun and our journey with Christ to Jerusalem will continue over the next six weeks, culminating with Holy Week and the Triduum, the great liturgy, which encompasses Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. Throughout this sacred time, we are called to pray, fast, repent and prepare our hearts and minds for the glory of the Resurrection.

Lent marks a change in both the appearance of the Church and the nature of the Liturgy of the Word at the Sunday Mass. The décor of the Church is plainer and there is a noticeable absence of flowers and other decorations. The priest and deacon wear purple vestments, which symbolize the penitential nature of the season. The focus of the liturgy is more solemn, with the absence of the *Gloria* at the Sunday Mass as well as a change in tone in the readings, which emphasize Jesus' journey to the cross.

In today's Gospel, we encounter Our Lord being tempted by Satan. Following his baptism, Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the spirit for forty days of prayer and fasting, where he was tempted by the devil. First, noting Jesus' hunger, he offered his first temptation, *"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."* Jesus replied, *"Man does not live by bread alone."* Then Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world, as if they were his to give, if only Jesus would worship him. Once again, Jesus rebuffed him, saying: *"You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."* Finally, the devil challenged him once again, leading him to the parapet of the Temple: *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you . . ."* Each time, the devil tempted the Lord, probing for any weakness of vulnerability and human frailty. Jesus resisted each temptation, until at last, he replied: *"You shall not put the Lord your God, to the test."* Satan then departed from Jesus, *"for a time."* Christ, the Son of God, resisted every temptation, remaining obedient to the Father and faithful to his mission.

The devil is insidious, he attacks us, sometimes blatantly, sometimes subtly, always shrewdly – probing for every weakness, any flaw in our human nature to turn us away from God. He may depart *"for a time,"* for an opportunity to ensnare us in his web of deceit. We must constantly be on guard against his machinations, for his path is the road to ruin. In a world beset by temptation, we must keep our eyes fixed on Christ, turning to him in prayer and obedience to remain steadfast against the very real power of Satan. As we journey through the Season of Lent, let us offer ourselves to the Lord, trusting in him to keep us safe from evil, and to abide safely in him. He is Our Lord and Savior, desiring only our good, for our own sake, out of an infinite and unconditional love, unlike the devil, who seeks to enslave us for his own evil desires.

**Deacon Steven Szmuto**