

An abstract oil painting featuring a central, pale, textured face. The face is composed of thick, layered brushstrokes in shades of pink, orange, and white. It is surrounded by a dense, chaotic composition of dark, expressive brushstrokes in deep blues, purples, and blacks. The background is a mix of lighter, more fluid strokes in greens, yellows, and blues. The overall effect is one of intense emotional depth and complex visual texture.

LENTEN PROGRAM 2016

MERCY



*the temptation*  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT**



# First Sunday of Lent

*The merciful Father protects us from evil; we must trust his merciful love.*

## Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pause  
and call to mind God's presence  
within and among us,  
today and always.

*Brief pause.*

**All: Through our annual Lenten observance, Lord, deepen our understanding of the mystery of Christ and make it a reality in the conduct of our lives. We make our prayer through our Lord. Amen.**

*(Taken from the Divine Office)*

## Responsorial Psalm

*Psalm 90:1-2, 10-15*

**R. Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
and abides in the shade of the Almighty  
says to the Lord: "My refuge,  
my stronghold, my God in whom I trust!" **R.**

Upon you no evil shall fall,  
no plague approach where you dwell.  
For you has he commanded his angels,  
to keep you in all your ways. **R.**

They shall bear you upon their hands  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.  
On the lion and the viper you will tread  
and trample the young lion and the dragon. **R.**

His love he set on me, so I will rescue him;  
protect him for he knows my name.  
When he calls I shall answer: "I am with you."  
I will save him in distress and give him glory. **R.**

**Listen to: Track 1: *Be with me Lord*  
on *Cry Out* which can be  
purchased at [lent.dow.org.au](http://lent.dow.org.au)**

## Second Reading

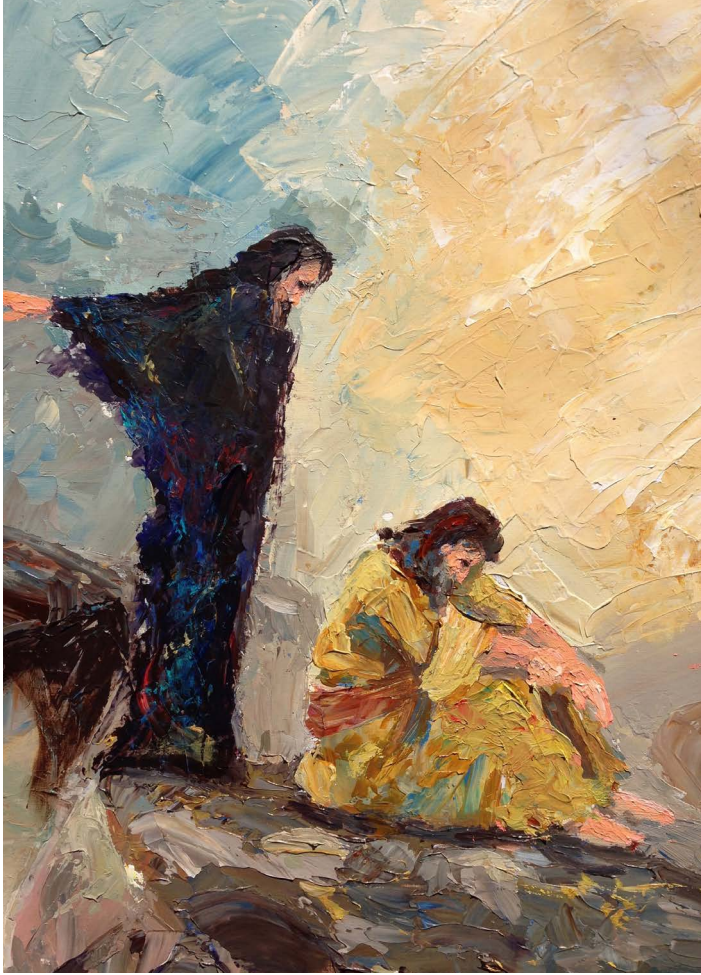
*Romans 10:8-13*

Scripture says: The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart. If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved. When scripture says: those who believe in him will have no cause for shame, it makes no distinction between Jew and Greek: all belong to the same Lord who is rich enough, however many ask for his help, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

The word of the Lord.

*Pause for silent reflection.*





## Gospel

*Luke 4:1-13*

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.” But Jesus replied, “Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.”

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, “I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.” But Jesus answered him, “Scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.”

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said to him, “throw yourself down from here, for Scripture says:

He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you, and again: They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.”

But Jesus answered him, “It has been said: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him to return at the appointed time.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Pause for silent reflection.*

# Trust

BY FR KEN BARKER MGL

Through the forty days of testing in the wilderness, Jesus was strengthened for the ministry ahead. During the forty days of Lent, we can also confront our demons and draw upon the power of Jesus to live a more victorious life. We know that Jesus was “tempted in every way that we are, but he did not sin.” (Heb 4:15) That gives us hope. It means that nothing can come against us that we cannot overcome, as long as we rely on the Lord. As St Paul says, “You can trust God not to be tried beyond your strength, and with any testing he will give you the way out of it and the strength to bear it.” (1Cor 10:13)

The Evil One works in our lives to deceive, confuse and to discourage us. He wants to take us out of the fight and render us ineffective for the Kingdom of God. Notice that in each temptation the Devil is trying to persuade Jesus to distrust the Father’s love and mercy. The very secret of Jesus’ whole life here on earth was his utmost trust in, and dependence on, the Father. He had heard the Father’s words at his baptism in the Jordan, “You are my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on you.” This was the bedrock of his interior life – the utterly firm conviction that he was held in the Father’s love. In the moment of temptation, Jesus is not deceived by Satan’s attempt to undermine this total trust in the Father.

Knowing Jesus is hungry, the devil tempts him to use divine power to turn stones to bread. This reminds us of temptations we have through our basic desires for food, drink, and sexual satisfaction. We are fed a lie that we cannot be fulfilled if we trust in God’s ways. Jesus simply answers, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word from the mouth of God.”

Then Satan blatantly tries to distract Jesus from the will of the Father by offering him all the kingdoms of the world. Satan is enticing Jesus

to abandon his trust that the Father’s love is all that matters. This temptation reminds us that when we bow down and worship money, success, status and worldly glory, we are, in effect, worshipping Satan rather than God. We can only have one Master, the Lord God, and he is the one we must trust totally.

The third temptation is more subtle. The Enemy seeks to stir up vanity and pride, through trying to get Jesus to be presumptuous about God’s goodness. It doesn’t work because Jesus has unshakeable trust in the Father. So while the Evil One will sow seeds of mistrust, we know our refuge and strength is in the Father’s loving mercy. As the psalmist says, “He is my refuge, my stronghold, my God in whom I trust.”

Our trust in the Father is also trust in Jesus crucified and risen. This is underlined by St Paul in today’s second reading. The Enemy tempts us to forget the saving power of God. He points the accusing finger at us, reminding us of the shame of our past. But those who believe in Jesus will “have no cause for shame”. Jesus took our shame and guilt upon himself on the cross and cancelled the debt owing to our sin. Now he is risen! How merciful is our God! All has been done for us. Our shame is taken away. We just have to believe and put our trust totally in him. No evil can overcome us when we are trusting in Jesus crucified and risen. “If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved.” (Rom 10:9-10) In the hour of temptation we can cry out for help and be assured of the strength we need. The promise is clear, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Rom 10:13) By the mercy of God, not by our own merits, Jesus has accomplished our salvation. It remains for us to actively trust in what Jesus has done, and cooperate with his saving Grace

*See page 7 for reflection questions.*

# *Mercy Suggests Forgiveness*

BY SR HILDA SCOTT OSB

We read that Jesus was “filled with the Holy Spirit”, and as a consequence, he allowed himself to be led out into the wilderness to face the known and the unknown. Right now, as you read this, you too have been filled with the Holy Spirit and are being led to a particular way of encounter with God, the known and the unknown, during these days of Lent.

You are here now because this is the very place for God to tell you and explore with you the only thing that matters, namely, his personal love for you and his mercy in your regard. Jesus was led and so are you. As Fr Ken has explained, you can expect much the same as him.

We are told that Jesus was “tempted there by the devil for forty days”. One has to ask, why is the devil going to so much trouble to cause Jesus grief? As it happens, Jesus is beginning his public ministry, and the devil has his eye on us. Jesus has come to show us the Person and the Mercy of God – to take you and me to that House of Mercy where everything is possible – especially that which we call the ‘impossible’ in our own lives. The temptations Jesus faced were temptations to doubt his Father’s fidelity to his love for him, to doubt his mercy. His response each time was to reaffirm what he, Jesus, already knew – that God would never leave him.

I once heard mercy described this way: “Mercy suggests forgiveness, it sings of compassion.” It is another name for God’s love expressed in his tenderness, his empathy, his compassion, his forgiveness, and most of all, in his fidelity in staying faithful to us no matter how unfaithful we are. Think how much we would have lost if the devil had succeeded. Haven’t you and I stood in need of forgiveness and compassion? Haven’t you and I needed a new start sometimes? Haven’t you and I needed God to be faithful to us? Had the devil succeeded, we might never have known mercy, we might never

have known that it doesn’t matter what we have done in our life, we can never be written off, and there is always a new start.

I heard recently about a family in Croatia. Their son today is a world renowned pastor, theologian and professor. Before he was born, the family had another son who was killed in an accident. It somehow involved a soldier who was absolutely distraught. The parents decided not to press charges. It was an accident and their hearts went out to the now inconsolable soldier. The father sought the man out a couple of times to see how he was going and then left him to get on with his life. In the meantime, their new son was born.

There was in the household a nanny, someone the family had taken in, though their own means were scant. This woman was a huge influence for all that was good in this child’s, and later, young man’s life. It was only as an adult that he discovered a hidden truth. His brother, who had died, had actually been in the care of this nanny when the accident happened. Baldly speaking, if there was blame in the tragic event, it lay at her door. She had not taken proper care of him. Yet when their new son was born, the parents put their baby into the care of this same nanny, trusting her with the most precious thing in their lives. She lived with them all her life without one word ever being said against her, without ever a hint of anything other than love, devotion, acceptance and gratitude – so much so that their new son never guessed the real story. This is mercy, and if you and I look into our own lives, we will find that God has done this for us time and time again. The temptation for us is to doubt God, to doubt not only the mercy of God, but our reserved place in that House of Mercy. Jesus didn’t doubt it for a second.

*See page 7 for reflection questions.*



# Reflection Questions

## Fr Ken's Reflection Questions

1. Have there been times in your life where you have felt tested beyond your strength, but with the benefit of hindsight, you can see how God gave you the strength to bear it? Do you find it difficult to recall such moments of strength as a source of reassurance when new trials befall you?
2. Fr Ken says that the secret to Jesus' whole life on earth was his utmost trust in, and dependence on, the Father – knowing he was the Beloved of the Father, held in the Father's love. Do you struggle with the truth that you too are the Beloved of the Father? Have you ever considered that Satan's ultimate goal is to undermine this truth that you are the Beloved and you are held in the Father's love?
3. Fr Ken says that Satan feeds us the lie that we cannot be fulfilled if we trust in God's ways. Do you sometimes withdraw from God for fear of being let down by him? Have you experienced the peace that comes from totally abandoning yourself to God's will and cooperating with his saving Grace?

## Sr Hilda's Reflection Questions

1. How did it make you feel when you read Sr Hilda's words, "Right now, as you read this, you too have been filled with the Holy Spirit and are being led to a particular way of encounter with God ... during these days of Lent?"
2. Sr Hilda says that while Jesus was going through his forty days of temptation, Satan has his eye on us. Satan does not want Jesus to take you and me to the House of Mercy where there are the many rooms of empathy, trust, tenderness, acceptance, forgiveness, compassion and understanding. Which room(s) do you need to be in most at the moment?
3. After reading Sr Hilda's story of the Croatian family's mercy shown to their nanny, does this inspire you to show mercy to someone in your life?



## Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pause and look into the eyes of Jesus. Let us hear him say, "Come to me all you that labour and are over-burdened, and I will give you rest. Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." Let us now, and indeed every day from here on, say this ancient prayer over and over again:

**All: Jesus Christ  
Son of the living God,  
have mercy on me,  
a sinner. Amen.**

Leader: Say it often enough and you will be firmly in touch with your place in the *House of Mercy*.

## For the Week Ahead

Jesus told us in St John's Gospel that there are many rooms inside his Father's house. There are indeed many rooms inside the Father's House of Mercy – empathy, trust, tenderness, acceptance, forgiveness, compassion and understanding.

Each week of this program, close your eyes and visit one of these rooms. Jesus will be at the front door to welcome you and show you in.

