

Lent is an invitation

An invitation to accompany Christ in the wilderness

To walk with him in his temptations

To witness how to answer these same temptations in our lives

And to enter into a total conversion of heart

In his book *The Life of Christ*

Bl Fulton Sheen tells us that Christ came into this world for one purpose

To die

And this is unique in all of human history

Because every one of us is born to live

But to make that happen

Christ came to die for our salvation

He did many things in this life

He was a teacher, a miracle worker and a king

But his primary mission was our salvation

And it was and continues to be Satan's mission to prevent this

So after his 40 days

Satan comes to him with three temptations

3 variations of which he still uses on us

3 temptations to lure Christ from his mission

3 temptations to get us to take our eyes off the cross

To lead us away from the one who saves

Shortcuts to a spiritual life

Shortcuts to remove the cross from our lives

The first temptation

What kind of a messiah are you?

What about all the human suffering

What about all the hunger in the world?

What about all the poor?

You should be mostly concerned with social engineering

Taking care of the physical needs of your people

Feed them

Command these stones become loaves of bread

Did you know in the wilderness of the Holy Land

There are rocks that resemble loaves of dark bread

One does not live by bread alone

But on every word that comes from the mouth of God

Then the devil takes Jesus to the parapet

The very top of the Temple

This is the center of Jewish life

Religious life, cultural life, political life

The Temple was their world

So he takes Jesus to the top of their world

To be seen by all

And perform a miracle for everyone to see

This is the temptation of self-promotion

Last week was the Oscars, right?

For the Hollywood crowd

Everybody who was anybody was there

Here is the devil tempting Jesus

Here is your five minutes of fame

Don't waste it

Do something on the grand stage

Nationwide coverage

Worldwide coverage

Perform a miracle here

And all the world will know

All the world will come to your door

But he did not come as a performer

His throne is not the throne set up by the world

His crown is one of thorns

His throne is a cross

Meekness and humility are the marks he leaves in our lives

You shall not put the Lord your God to the test

He did not come to simply be a wonder-worker

But to work wonders in our hearts

The third shortcut is one of political power and authority

All the kingdoms of the world

They are yours

All you have to do is bow before me

**Take this power and the authority of earthly kingdoms will be at
your discretion**

To be used as you see fit

But we see what raw political power holds

Without addressing sin in the lives of their people

Without addressing sin in the lives of those in power

Political power simply brings anguish and suffering into the world

No amount of law is a replacement for conversion of heart

The lord your God shall you worship

Him alone shall you serve

So walking with Christ this Lent

We know there are things he desires

And things that are central to his mission

He desires that we feed the poor

That we take care of the sick

His church continues to work wonders in the world

And she influences political power across the globe

These are all good things

But they are not central to his mission

We can be tempted to take any one of these things

And give them the upmost importance

That is what Satan tempted Christ to do

To distract him

This is the one thing you must do

This is the thing your church must do

Prove to me that you are who you claim

Satan demands that Christ conform to him

But faith is not a matter of mathematics

And we conform our lives to Him

It is a matter of love and trust

There is really only one thing we must do

Love God above all things

And love our neighbor as ourselves

If this is our guide for our Lenten conversion

We will accompany Christ these 40 days

We will die with him

And we will rise with him on Easter morning

Doing this, our Lenten practices will not end on Holy Saturday

But will be the cornerstone of a new life

A converted heart

There are no shortcuts to embracing the cross

Only shortcuts to avoid it

Have a blessed Lenten journey