

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



Jesus begins the journey

Many, many years ago, just at the entrance to the beautiful Garden of Life, God condemned the serpent, Satan, saying: "Go out now, devil, into the world. It is to be your domain. This is your punishment because you have shown humans how to be evil: you are singled out from all of the other animals of the whole earth to be cursed forever. You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life."

And so the serpent, the most cunning of all creatures, slithered away from the garden. God stationed His mighty angels at the entrance, which they guarded with flaming swords, to forever keep the serpent from returning to the Garden of Life.

But the devil was not the least bit dismayed, for God had given him free reign over the entire world, and he was not without purpose. Satan promised humans everything in his world, if they would obey him. "I am most persuasive," he thought shrewdly. All who foolishly said "yes" to him were destroyed.

One day, the serpent heard God calling to him. "Satan, there is a man in your world who can defeat your powers of darkness," the Lord said. "This man will never say 'yes' to you."

The devil's crafty red eyes flickered with excitement. He loved a challenge. "Impossible! I have never known even one of

your humans not to say 'yes' at least once. Not Moses, nor David, nor Solomon — all have failed you," the devil said, laughing derisively.

"This man is different," the Lord continued.

"Why?" the devil hissed. "All of your miserable creatures are the same. They are born, they live and they all must die. After they die, they return to the earth, where they become worthless ashes. This dust is the food of my existence. Remember? It was you who willed this."

"I've sent someone to change all of this. He will save my people forever," the Lord replied. "If they choose, they can leave your world and live forever."

"No human can ever accomplish that," the devil protested. "I don't believe."

"You'll see, Satan. You'll see. I've sent my Son to take my people back home."

This last statement caught the devil off-balance for a brief moment, but he quickly recovered, saying, "Where is this man that you claim is your son?"

Out in the desert of your world," the Lord replied. "He is waiting for you."

At that exact second in time, Jesus perceived His Father's will and resolved to accomplish it. Forty days ago, Jesus had come all alone to this barren wilderness. Only two sounds interrupted the loneliness.

At night, the howling of wild beasts echoed in the desert. By day, the hot, dry wind roared through the sand and rocks that stretched on for miles in this wasteland.

During all of this time, Jesus had fasted and prayed, and by now He was very hungry. Slowly, the serpent coiled out from beneath a rock. His clever eyes flashed when he beheld Jesus.

"Jesus," the devil hissed. "There is no need to be hungering."

Jesus said nothing.

"If you truly are the Son of God, you have only to command these rocks, and they will be transformed into wonderful loaves of bread. Say 'yes,'" the great tempter coaxed.

"No!" said Jesus firmly. "There is much more to life than satisfying hunger. The most important thing is obedience to God."

The devil, undaunted by his first failure, waited for a second chance. "You are right, Jesus. There is more to life. Come with me now to Jerusalem."

In the next instance, Satan had become a man and stood with Jesus at the pinnacle of the Temple.

"Trust me, Jesus; there is nothing to fear," said Satan. "If you are truly the Son of God, jump off. Your Father will send his angels to save you."

"Scripture says," Jesus replied, "that we are not to put God to a foolish test."

"I have saved the best until last," the devil said, still confident.

Now Satan stood with Jesus on the peak of the highest mountain in the land. The devil wore a jeweled crown and the royal garb of a king.

"All of this is mine, Jesus," the devil

gestured wildly, "even farther than we can see. Your own Father gave it to me many years ago. Are you impressed?"

Jesus said nothing.

"If you will just kneel down and worship me," the devil offered, "I will turn it all over to you!"

"Leave me, Satan!" Jesus thundered. "I know who you are. There is only one God worthy of man's praise and obedience."

"You'll see that I am a most formidable enemy, Jesus," replied the devil. "You are nothing to me, and I will defeat you in time!"

Now the devil, who was transformed into a wild beast, bared his teeth, ready to lunge. Jesus closed His eyes and whispered, "Abba." Immediately, He was whisked in the desert. Two angels appeared with food and ministered to Him. It was time for Jesus to take His Father's people home.

For discussion:

- 1) What three temptations did the devil offer to Jesus? How does Satan tempt us today?
- 2) What part of myself do I need to "give up" to truly follow Jesus?

For further reading:

- 1) The story of the first temptation by Satan is found in Genesis, Chapter 3.
- 2) Jesus is tempted by Satan before He begins His ministry, in Matthew, Chapter 4:1-11.

Meditation for Lent:

Dear Jesus, show me the stumbling blocks in my life that need to be transformed by you into stepping stones in my own journey back to you.

CANA to demonstrate on Fridays during Lent

Catholics Against Nuclear Arms (CANA) will lead demonstrations in front of the Federal Building in Rochester on each of the Fridays in Lent. The demonstrations, which will begin at 4:30 p.m. and continue for just over an hour, are being held in conjunction with similar actions at nuclear test sites in the Nevada desert.

Each week's demonstration will focus on a different theme, while all of the gatherings will include a prayer service. The schedule is

as follows: March 6, "The Arms Race and World Hunger;" March 13, "Turning Swords into Plowshares;" March 20, "The Challenge of Peace;" March 27, "War Toys versus Teaching Children Love;" April 3, "Worshipping Gods of Metal;" April 10, "A Call to Non-violence;" and April 17; annual Good Friday celebration, 12 noon to 3 p.m., at the Seneca Army Depot Troop Gate on Route 96A.

All are invited to participate in these gatherings. For more information, call Sister Beatrice Ganley, SSJ, at (716)586-1000, extension 55.

Lenten renewal series offered by Fr. Green, retreat director

Well-known author and retreat director Father Thomas Green, SJ, will give a Lenten renewal series this year at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Rhinecliff and Imperial Drives, Rochester.

The theme of the Lenten renewal program is "Lay Spirituality."

Father Green, a native of Rochester, is currently serving as a member of the faculty of San Jose Seminary, Manila, Philippines.

Father Green will give five conferences on

March 9, 18 and 25, and April 1 and 8. The conferences are entitled "Prayer Today," March 9; "Continual Conversion of Life," March 18; "The Catholic as a Witness," March 25; "The Ministry of the Laity" April 1; and "Relationship of Christ and Us in 1987," April 8. The conferences, scheduled for 7:30-8:30 p.m., will be followed by a discussion for those who wish to participate.

Father Green is the author of five widely read books on spirituality: *Opening to God*, *When the Well Runs Dry*, *Darkness in the Marketplace*, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, and *Vacation with the Lord*.

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