

**Lent 1C.19;** Dt. 26:4-10; Rom 10:8-12; Luke 4:1-12; *The Lenten Masterpiece!*

Viktor Frankl once said, “*When we are no longer able to change a situation, ... we are challenged to change ourselves.*”

**Could this be a motto for the Season of Lent?**

When *Leonardo da Vinci* was painting his masterpiece, “The Last Supper,” he looked for a model for **his Christ**. At last, he located a chorister in one of the churches of Rome who was a lovely in life and features, a young man named *Pietro Bandinelli*. Years passed, and the painting was unfinished. All the disciples had been painted save one, **Judas Iscariot**. Now da Vinci started to look for a man, whose face was hardened and distorted by sin, and at last he found a beggar on the streets of Rome with a face so villainous that da Vinci shuddered when he looked at him. He hired the man to sit for him as he painted the face of Judas on his canvas. When he was about to dismiss the man, da Vinci said,

“I have not yet found out your name.”

**“I am *Pietro Bandinelli*. I also sat for you as your model of Christ.”**

(Stories for All Seasons, Lent 1C, G. Butler)

Lent is a time to look inside ourselves.

**Who am I? ...Who have I become? ... Who do I want to become?”**

**Jesus knows this territory very well ....**

The conflict between Jesus and Satan begins with Jesus emerging from the Jordan at his baptism, when he hears the voice of his Father declare:

**“*You are my Beloved Son. . .*” Jesus knows that he is *the Beloved*.**

As storyteller *John Shea* says so well, “*Before you know who you are, you just have options. Once you know who you are, you can be tested.*”

Now the Spirit leads Jesus into the desert to be tested.

And, just look at those temptations:

**Bread from stones, seeking power and glory, jumping off the top of the Temple to bait God to prove Divine love .... by saving us from being human!**

Jesus is in the desert, alone with Satan, and Satan is trying to find out who Jesus is

**- is he really *THE Son of God?***

The answer is revealed not just in words

... but in Jesus' obedience to the word of God in the scripture.

**Tempting Jesus was the challenge of a lifetime.** Since the beginning of Humanity, the conflict between Good and Evil, has now reached its climax.

The Satan's first tack is to *pervert the idea of being Son of God*. Demoting the concept of "**Sonship**" to the level of aristocratic entitlement – Jesus should never be hungry! Jesus replies that there are things in life more important than bread.

Physical gratification didn't work. **Now for round two.** The temptation to acquire power over the nations. (Recall Eden's temptation was *to be like God*.)

**2** Jesus replies that **coercive domination** over others is not who he is. Jesus says that he believes in an entirely *different sort of power* and he will dedicate himself only to God. That *consecration will be such a source of power & freedom*, that nothing will entice him to accept anything less. Jesus loves and respects Humanity

... and seeks *only to increase human freedom where real love can grow.*

**Round three: let's add some "razzle-dazzle."** Satan essentially says, "*Jump off the Temple and force God to save you. Then you'll be a real celebrity and your mission will be a walk in the park.*" Jesus replies that he will not manipulate God. God expresses love on divine terms, not on a temporary and puny human agenda.

**From here in Luke's gospel, Jesus will travel to Jerusalem, to die and to rise, revealing to the world ... the reality of the Father's all-encompassing love.**

### **What do we take away from this encounter?**

The Temptations of Jesus centered on how he would assume and grow in his identity as **God's Beloved, fully human son**. The temptations *to selfishness, power, and manipulating God, were surely as real in his life as they are today.* Luke's gospel tells us that at the end of the testing, Satan went and left Jesus, "**for a time.**" This desert exchange reminds us that evil will never tire of *offering cheap, attractive, and corrupt* ways to fulfill our real human needs for

... *sustenance, self-expression, and genuine relationship with God and others.*

**The Son of God chose to enter into the struggle.**

**Lent is our opportunity to do the same.**

**Sin is our temptations not to act as, *the Beloved*, **THE daughters and sons of God**, the temptation not to obey the Word and not to respond to the commands of God. **Maybe, just like Jesus, we need to face this reality!****

Did you know, ***“Improvement begins with I.”*** -Anonymous

And we have divine assurance that we are not alone,

***“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*** Romans 10:13

Change is difficult, not impossible.

***At this Lenten Liturgy of the Desert***, let us to take back the pieces of our lives that we may have been given over to authorities other than God. It's a time to do homage to God, *a time of challenge and choices, of failures and promises,*

*... of change and small victories.*

Most of all it is a time of deepened awareness of how much we must grow.

It is a time of trust, with the season of the cross shadowing over us.

(Some ideas, Megan McKenna, *Lent*)

**Trust this, just like Jesus,**

**You and I... REALLY ARE *THE BELOVED*.**

**And just like Jesus,**

**WE can become *the Masterpiece* of the Father!**