

**The testing of Jesus in the desert reminds us of the testing of the Israelites in the desert. Israel complained about the food, tested God's patience and entertained the lure of false gods. Matthew has written the temptation of Jesus to tell us that where Israel in the wilderness failed, Jesus in the wilderness succeeded.**

**As we begin Lent, we hear the stories of these temptations not just as a history lesson, but because we all face these temptations too. The world that God created tests us.**

**In the first test, the devil, seeing that Jesus was hungry, suggested that Jesus change stones into bread. Jesus can have the very thing he craves if he manipulates the world around him to get it. The devil tempts him not just to break a fast, but to alter reality. The devil tempts us too when we cannot stand the way things are, the opinion someone else holds or the actions other people do. We are tempted to change the world around us. We force people to do things by laying guilt on them. We ignore the needs of others. We do not have the power to change stones into bread, nor can we change other people. When we try, we only make life miserable. We give in to the first temptation.**

**In the second test, the devil told Jesus to throw himself off the temple and let angels carry him down. The devil tested Jesus to see if Jesus would test God. Is God really faithful to the covenant? Does God's promise have meaning? We receive this temptation too. We don't wear a seatbelt, saying God will take care of me. We don't go for a physical checkup. We don't eat right. We don't exercise. We test God's love for us. We don't contribute to charities. We don't support the food pantry. We don't write to our public officials. We say God is love. God should be taking care of those things. In our negligence, we test God. We give in to the second temptation.**

**In the third test, the devil asks Jesus to worship him in exchange for worldly power. We also get the temptation to worship a false god. We think if we have more money that we will be more powerful, so we get as much as we can no matter who else suffers. We think drugs will bring us happiness, casual sex will end our loneliness, nuclear might will bring us**

**safety and concealed weapons will protect. We worship the false gods of sex, money, drugs and violence instead of the love of God. We give in to the third temptation.**

**During Lent we spend forty days at war with our temptations. Through prayer, fasting and charity, and with Christ at our side, we can overcome.**