



In today's Gospel, the First Sunday of Lent, we find Jesus in the desert: hungry, uncomfortable, vulnerable and under full attack by the Devil. St Thomas Aquinas wrote, "Jesus went to the desert as to a field of battle." Today we know the reason Jesus subjected himself to such agony: it was, as we say in the Creed every week, "for us men and for our salvation." Jesus was doing battle on our behalf.

The three temptations experienced by Jesus in the desert represent the three categories of temptation common to all humanity. In the letter of John, these three avenues of temptation are succinctly identified: "the lust of the flesh, the lust

of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16). The "lust of the flesh" is the temptation to overindulge bodily pleasures, such as in the case of gluttony or illicit sexual behavior. The Devil tempts Jesus to turn the stone into bread; Jesus knew His mission at that moment mandated fasting; He replies, "Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." Obedience to God is more important than satisfying the desires of the flesh. Secondly, Jesus is tempted to sin by indulging the "lust of the eyes" which is the temptation of greed. The Devil offers Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world" if only Jesus would worship him. Jesus responds, "You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve." Jesus practiced what He preached, "What good would it be to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul in the process?" Finally, Jesus is tempted to indulge the desire St. John called "the boastful pride of life." The Devil tempts Jesus to demonstrate His greatness by a show of power: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" Father send the angels to catch you. the Lord, your God, to the test." display of power; His way was the "the greatest among you, must be Paul, God's "power is made perfect responds, "I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong." Once again, Jesus triumphs over temptation.

***"Jesus went to the desert
as to a field of battle."
— St. Thomas Aquinas***

from the temple and have your Jesus responds, "You shall not put Jesus refused to exalt Himself by a way of a humble, suffering servant, the least of all." As Jesus taught St. in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). St. Paul

What does Jesus' victory over all the temptations of the world mean for us? It means that we, in Him, can also win the victory: we do not have to be slaves of sin. Notice, Jesus was prepared for His battle with the Devil. The Scriptures say He was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and was "led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days." We too must be prepared if want to overcome temptation. In this season of Lent we are called to join Jesus in the desert in the battle against temptation and the Devil. We are called to fast, to pray, and to give alms: these are three weapons we need in order to triumph over the three avenues of temptation. May we enter these holy days of Lent as Jesus entered the desert: as to a field of battle. We must have high hopes and confidence, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor and to find help in time of need" (Heb 4:15). I leave you with the Prayer after Communion for today's Mass: "Renewed now with heavenly bread, by which faith is nourished, hope increased, and charity strengthened, we pray, O Lord, that we may learn to hunger for Christ the true and living Bread, and strive to live by every word which proceeds from your mouth. Through Christ our Lord." And everyone responds: AMEN!!!



Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples



Saint Frances of Rome

Feast Day: March 9

Born: 1384 Died March 9, 1440

Patron of Motorists (stems from a legend that an angel would light the road before her with a lantern, keeping her safe from hazards), Widows, and Benedictine Oblates

Canonized: May 9, 1608 by Pope Paul V

Saint Francis of Rome was born Francesca Bussa de'Leoni into a noble Roman family. Frances desired to enter a convent at the age of 11. However, in obedience to her parents, she married Lorenzo Panziano of Rome, a young nobleman and commander of the papal troops. When Lorenzo married thirteen-year-old Frances, everyone was in awe. Not only did he marry one of the most charming and gentle girls in Rome but one who was virtuous as well. Frances was different from other rich girls. Her mother had taught her to pray and to love the poor, as well as how to manage a large household. Despite being an arranged marriage, their union proved happy and lasted 40 years.

She dressed in the silks, velvets, and jewels of the family to please her husband, who dearly loved her. She also loved him, but sometimes she longed to serve God by helping the poor. One day the wife of her husband's brother, Vanozza, found Frances crying and told her she had the same desire. With their husbands' blessings to help the poor, they set out together to live their married lives but also care for others in need. Often Frances and Vanozza left the palace in simple dresses and veils to perform their missions. Lorenzo's family was horrified when they learned of this. They made fun of the young women.

Frances persuaded Lorenzo to let her continue to serve the needy. Frances was a good mother. She personally educated her children and cared for them. When her mother-in-law died, Frances took charge of the castle. Although she spent long hours in prayer, she always saw to her family's needs first. When floods and famine crippled Rome, Frances turned her house into a hospital and distributed food and clothing. Her father-in-law was so angry that he took away her keys to the supply rooms; but he gave them back when he saw that the corn bin and wine barrel were miraculously full again after Frances finished praying. When Rome was invaded, Frances suffered the kidnapping of her husband and the death of two of her three children. Again, when plagues came, Frances opened her home as a hospital and drove her wagon through the countryside to collect wood for fire and herbs for medicine. It is said that for twenty-three years Frances had an archangel as her companion. Visible only to Frances, the angel protected her.

Frances suffered much from her son's hot-tempered wife, who looked down on Frances because of her love of the poor. When this girl fell seriously ill, Frances nursed her back to health and converted her by her kindness.

When Frances's husband returned, she founded an order of sisters called the Oblates of St. Mary. This was a congregation of women, initially composed of ten ladies, who lived in their own homes and served the poor. They met regularly at the Basilica of Santa Maria Nova to listen to Frances' spiritual guidance. Later the Oblates decided to live a community life, but Frances did not join them until after her husband died and her one remaining child was an adult.

Reflection: Looking at the exemplary life of fidelity to God and devotion to her fellow human beings which Frances of Rome was blessed to lead, one cannot help but be reminded of a current day saint; Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who loved Jesus Christ in prayer and in the poor. The life of Frances of Rome calls each of us not only to look deeply for God in prayer but also to carry our devotion to Jesus living in the suffering of our world. Frances shows us that this life need not be restricted to those bound by family nor vows.