

The Faith of Our Fathers

When the devil tempts me, my heart is comforted and my faith is strengthened, because I know Him who for my sake has overcome the devil, and that He comes to me to be my help and my comfort. Thus faith overcomes the devil. Therefore, first, God teaches me faith, that I may know that for my sake Christ has overcome the devil. Then, since, I now know that the devil has no power over me but is overcome by faith, I must be ready to be tempted. The purpose of this is that my faith may be strengthened, and that my neighbor may be given by example by my victory over temptation, and may be comforted. (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

When is Jesus led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil? After the Descent of the Holy Spirit. After the Voice speaking from above had said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mt. Iii. 17). Since He did everything in order to teach us and suffered everything for the same reason, so He also willed to be led by the Spirit into the desert to meet the devil in combat. Therefore, no one should be shocked if He suffers even severer temptations, as though something strange had happened. Yet by His temptations, we learn to stand firm and endure with fortitude what happens according to the ordinary rule of our life. (St. John Chrysostom) ❧❧❧

Because of the evil will of the devil, we are caught in the snare of diabolical tyranny. In our misery, we dare not raise our eyes to heaven for mercy. Where is the way of salvation? What pardon is there for those who have broken the command of the Lord? There is only the clemency of God—His mercy and compassion. So He sent His Son as our Savior and Redeemer, who alone has power to free mankind from the grip of the devil. With infinite kindness and goodness, the Only Begotten Son of the Father took upon Himself our likeness and was made in all things as we are—except sin—so that through Himself He might redeem us all, and bring us to God the Father, freed from all defilement and stain. This is why He suffered hunger, and fasted. It was the beginning of our salvation. (St. Cyril of Alexandria) ❧❧❧

For *Invocavit*. These excerpts are intended as meditative pieces for the Day's pericopes. They have been edited and abridged for style, sense and space.

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Christ has served and helped us by His fasting, hunger, temptation and victory. Also, whoever believes on Christ shall never suffer need, and temptation shall never harm him. Instead, we shall have enough in the midst of want and be safe in the midst of temptation because the Lord triumphed in our behalf. Christ's fasting also encourages us to believe that, by His example, we can cheerfully suffer want and temptation for the service of God and the good of our neighbor, like Christ did for us. Therefore this Gospel is sweet consolation and power against the unbelief. It awakens and strengthens our conscience, that we may not be anxious about the nourishment of our bodies, but be assured that God can and will give us our daily bread. (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

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