

The First Sunday of Lent

Fr. Trey Nelson

"At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted..."

(From Matthew 4:1-11)



I heard it said on our priests' retreat one year, that, there is a difference between stress and tension. "Stress," the retreat direction said, "is never good for us. It's unhealthy. It can weaken a building, and it can weaken us." Then he said, "tension, on the other hand, can not only be good—it can also be holy. Jesus placed the disciples in a moment of tension when he asked them to freely choose to follow him."

Given today's Gospel, I've been reflecting on the notion of temptation and wondering how my attitude toward it has changed, say, from when I was a child. And I have come to a conclusion. For me, the greatest temptation of all is to forget the fact that "tension" is always going to be a part of following Christ. Living a morally good life, living a holy life is not meant to be easy. We can take the easy way, if we want to, and fall into the fallacy that our actions affect no one but ourselves, but we all know that this provides only a shallow momentary sense of security. Sometimes I wonder if, before praying for the "strength to fight temptation," we might want to pray, instead, for an openness to the tension that comes with it and a deeper belief that it's all worth it.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Are you aware of what "tempts" you away from holiness?
2. How do you react to the "tension" that comes with following Christ?
3. Are you able to accept the Lord's forgiveness and try again?