

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Some years ago a young country music singer named Lari White provided us with the essence of today's Scriptures when she sang: "Lead me not into temptation. I already know that road all too well. Lead me not into temptation. I can find it all by myself."

One verse of the song goes, "I've the best of intentions, Lord. I mean to be good and stick to the path I should go. But seems the harder I try, the further I slide. 'til I'm lost down that same dead end road."

Then, back to the refrain, "Lead me not into temptation. I already know that road all too well. Lead me not into temptation. I can find it all by myself."

I don't know about you, but that little country gal sure got my number. TEMPTATION!

From the time of Adam and Eve, right on through the time of Jesus, to our lives today, TEMPTATION—the desire to have, to do, to use, to take, to say what we know is wrong. It is one of the primary constants of the human condition that transcends everything else—the rich, the poor, the educated, the uneducated, the religious, the irreligious, people of every age, race, ethnicity, religion—all are tempted.

The Scripture reminds us today that Jesus Himself was tempted. One Scripture scholar suggests that, at a more basic level, he was, not so much tempted, as confronted by the devil with his own vulnerabilities and inner spiritual conflicts. The devil confronts Jesus with the hunger he is suffering after 40 days of fasting; he confronts him with power when he knows that God has sent him

into the world powerless; and he confronts him with glory when he senses that his mission will end in misery and death. But, Jesus stands firmly on the Word of God and His trust in God, and sends Satan packin'.

To be human is to be tempted—tempted to anger, tempted to lust, tempted to laziness, tempted to stubbornness, tempted to greed, tempted to vengeance, and the list goes on and on and on. How do you say NO to temptation? We call it “impulse control” in children, and it is the most basic virtue they can acquire. But how do we learn to control our most basic impulses and desires?

In his encounter in the desert, Jesus shows us the way—stand on the Word of God. But to do that you have to know it. You have to read the Bible. You have to study your Scripture.

God forbid! What a Protestant thought! Send him back to the Baptists!

I'm just saying—that's what Jesus did. He stood on God's Word!

Maybe you need permission? By virtue of the authority entrusted to me as Pastor of Our Lady of Consolation Parish, I hereby give every member of this parish permission to read your Bible, to study your Scriptures, especially in times of temptation.

What happened then when Jesus told old Beelzebub to take a hike? Well, according to the Word today, “angels came and ministered to Him”.

Well, I'm not sure they're necessarily angels, but I do know that if you stay as close as possible to Christian friends who share the same values, the Evil One has a hard time getting a hold on you. That's why during Lent we are encouraging you to come out on Tuesday

nights to study the Lenten Scriptures with like-minded folks; (there's even a bonus offered on Tuesday night. I'll be there to offer you the grace of God's already-forgiving love in the Sacrament of Reconciliation); pray with the Prayer Group on Wednesday nights; and pray the Stations of the Cross on Friday nights. Or, if possible, come to one of the daily Masses at 8:30 in the morning. With all that prayin' and Bible-readin' and Christian love and support going on, there's just no time to give in to TEMPTATION.

Finally, I learned them in about the second grade. They are called the near occasions of sin. They're taught in every 12-step program, whether it's Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or any other Anonymous. PEOPLE! PLACES! AND THINGS! You and I already know the people, places, and things we have to stay away from if we don't want to deal with temptation. That's what the little lady from Nashville is singing about:

“Lead me not into temptation. I already know that road all too well. Lead me not into temptation. I can find it all by myself. I've the best of intentions, Lord. I mean to be good and stick to the path I should go. But seems the harder I try, the further I slide. ‘til I'm lost down that same dead end road. Lead me not into temptation. I already know that road all too well. Lead me not into temptation. I can find it all by myself.”