

In the 1980s millions of Americans laughed at the “Church Lady” on *Saturday Night Live*. She was quick to blame bad behavior on “Hmmm . . . Who could it be? Satan?!” A decade earlier, comedian Flip Wilson loved to use the line “The devil made me do it!” I remember the old Bugs Bunny cartoons that always seemed to have a little angel on one shoulder and a little devil on the other. Almost 2,000 years earlier still, St. Paul proclaimed, not on prime-time television but on the pages of Holy Scripture: “**No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind**” (1 Co 10:13). Comedians and apostles are in agreement: temptation is a fact of life.

Temptation. It has been with us since that awful day in Eden when our first parents traded in their righteousness for a bite of forbidden fruit. It rears its ugly head on a daily basis down to this very day. Perhaps the comedians are on to something. It certainly is easier to laugh about temptation than it is to actually resist it! Oh, we laugh, but deep down we know that temptation is no laughing matter. The laughing face (all too often!) hides a guilty heart and sobbing soul.

But am I the only one here who wonders whether or not we might be living in an age of *uncommonly awful* temptation? We pray “Lead us not into temptation.” But looking around our world, do you ever wonder if God is still listening to that petition? Just take a quick tour through a few commandments:

- We are to remember the Sabbath Day, yet only 1 in 5 Americans attends a house of worship every weekend. And that number is getting worse every year.
- We are to honor our father and mother, yet that can be tricky when roughly half of our nation has a father and a mother AND a stepfather and stepmother and perhaps a second stepmother and now mom’s new boyfriend. Honor them? What is a child supposed to do?

- We are to keep ourselves from adultery, yet a 12-year-old child with a mobile device is just a click or two away from Internet content that would make David and Bathsheba blush.

I could go on, but I won’t. You get the picture. Temptation is no laughing matter. It is a matter of life or death! As long as we live in this world, we live on the devil’s turf. Temptation is *all around* us. By nature it is *within* us. And until that day when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead, the devil will never tire of tempting us. His fury is great, for his time is short! And there is but one hope: **The beauty of Repent! Turn to Jesus When You Face Temptations.**

After all, Jesus knows all about temptation, huh? I mean, the water from his baptism was barely dry when St. Mark wrote: “**At once the Spirit sent [Jesus] out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan**” (Mk 1:12,13). At the start of his earthly ministry, for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, Jesus went toe-to-toe with the devil. Oh, and Satan was soft. Subtle. Sweet, even!

And he was there still tempting Jesus on the final night of his ministry in Gethsemane’s garden. No longer soft, sweet, and subtle. Satan was tempting Jesus with raw fear! The **fear** of complete rejection by his followers and even his Father. **Terror** at the thought of the next day’s torture. **Dread** at the thought of his coming death. Utter **horror** at the literal hell he was about to suffer. Gut wrenching **disgust** at the thought of drinking the contents of the cup he would gulp down.

And what a cup it was! Jesus prayed earnestly for the Father to take the cup from him...this cup filled with the rebellion of an Adam. The drunkenness of a Noah. The lies of an Abraham. The deceit of a Jacob. The adultery of a David. The greed of a Matthew. The denial of a Peter. The betrayal of a Judas. The murder of a Paul. All of it was in the cup. And more . . . The sins of my past and yours. The thoughts in my head and yours that would fill us with shame and others with hatred if beamed up on the front

wall. The words we've spoken to hurt others. The deeds we've done to please ourselves They're all in the cup! And the One who knew no sin drank the cup of sin and made these sins his very own.

That's right: the Son of God, who is pure holiness, takes the world's solid sinfulness and makes it his very own. The eternal Son, who is life personified, faces death by crucifixion. The Son, who is LOVE, who loves the Father with a perfect love and is loved by the Father with a perfect love, is now to be shown the backhand of the Father's wrath! The thought of what was about to happen to him *terrorized* him as true man and *revolted* him as true God. In spite of it all, he remained perfectly pure and perfectly in tune with the Father's will. He prays, "***Abba, Father, . . . "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."***

...and temptation was trounced. The cup was drunk down to the dregs. Jesus left the garden and carried his cross to the place of the skull. And there God condemned sin in the likeness of sinful flesh. In Christ, God's just judgment is perfectly served in his Son. Through Christ, we are served with mercy, forgiveness, and healing! In a garden, our first father, Adam, sinned and then ran. In a garden, Christ, our brother, remained holy and stood firm! Because "***God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it***" (1 Co 10:13).

You know how it goes: without him the Judas in us would quickly betray, the Peter would quickly deny, the John would quickly sleep, the David would quickly covet, and the Cain would quickly kill. No, when the flesh trembles in weakness in the face of temptation, turn to Jesus—placing yourself completely in the hands of the One who triumphed over temptation. He has the strength and the will to keep you standing firm in times of temptation! Turn to Jesus with prayers of repentance. Rest your wounded soul in the wounds of Jesus for forgiveness and healing! Turn to Jesus. Only Jesus. Always Jesus! Amen.