

**First Sunday of Lent (C)  
February 25, 2007  
By Father Charles Bowes**

**Deuteronomy 26:4-10  
Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15  
Romans 10:8-13  
Luke: 4:1-13**

## *God calls us, like Jesus, beyond something good to something better.*

It has long struck me that the three things that tempt Jesus are not all that bad.

In fact they are good. They are good things: physical comfort, political power and spectacular display. Or said simply, pleasure, power and fame. These are good things. There's nothing wrong with them. We need them. We employ them - I know I do. There are things and people that give me pleasure and joy. Joy is an infallible sign of the presence of God. I have a measure of power - enough to do my job. And I have fame sufficient, a reputation. People know who I am. Pleasure, power and fame - they're part of who we are and are good things that enable us to live.

So in Luke chapter 4, pleasure, power and fame are not challenges for Jesus to choose between good and evil. That would not be a temptation for Jesus. The issue here and throughout Jesus' life and in our lives always revolves around doing good versus doing better. The devil never goes after a perceived weakness in Jesus. On the contrary, the devil focuses on Jesus' strengths: his compassion (Luke 4:3-4: "Command these stones to become bread"), his commitment to God (Luke 4:5-8: "I shall give you all this power, if you worship me"), and his faith (Luke 4:9-12: "Throw yourself down and angels will guard you"). All three temptations have to do with how Jesus should use his divine power - to prove that Jesus is in fact God's beloved Son - a good thing in itself. But Jesus chooses the better thing - to follow his Father's plan for him to reveal who he is in

God's good time and in God's own way - the death and resurrection passage.

And that's the choice we have in Lent: not just between doing good and doing evil but also between doing something good and doing something better. And, as I mentioned last week, even if we fail in our Lenten penance, that can be the something better in that it brings home to us our need of God in order for us to do anything of value. Remember that the purpose of penance is not to confirm us in our sense of virtue, but to bring home to us our radical need of salvation, our ever-present need for God to act. That's what Jesus shows us in choosing what was better and not just what was good.

Among the choices for the better we have this Lent is whether and how to participate in some way in our Parish Mission to take place this spring. A flyer, this flyer, is in today's bulletin, giving the dates and inviting children and adults. Yes, there are morning and evening sessions for adults and teens and evening sessions for children, ages 3 to 11.

And there are a number of ways to participate, each focused on the clever idea of reaching for the good and even for the better. Take a copy of the prayer card in your pew, and we'll review the opportunities.

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