

March 1, 2020 Mt. 4: 1-11, Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7

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Connie May 2/9/2011

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Link to additional [Beck](#) (Choose this week's column)

Stone, Naomi. [A Morning Prayer](#)

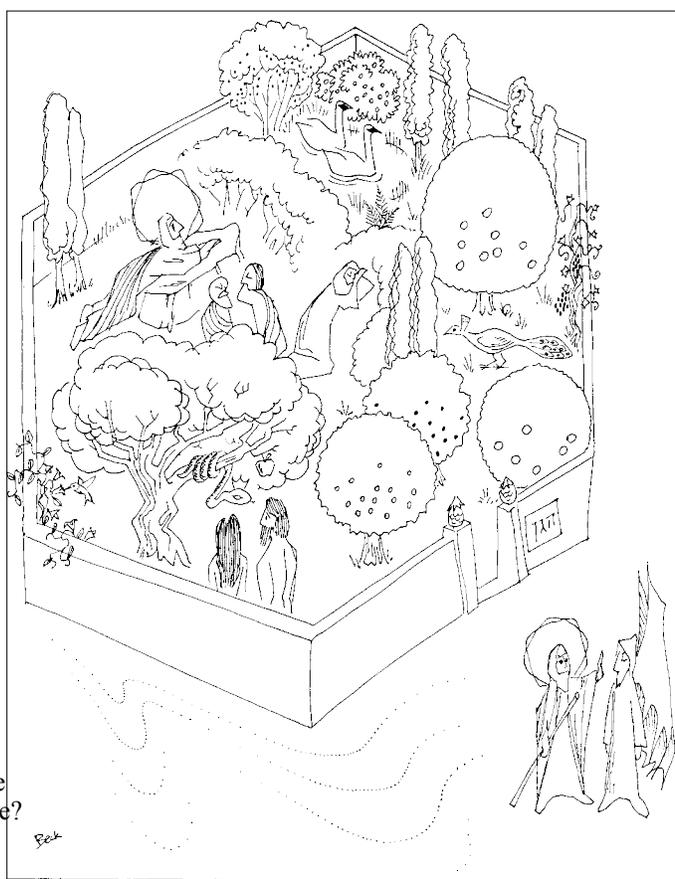
Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Get Behind Me Satan](#)

Additional [Resources](#)

[U tube link](#)

### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Fr. Beck's drawing today illustrates very well the nature of Jesus' situation as he considers all the ways he might do the right thing for the wrong reason. Jesus reaches clear back to the original error in the garden of Eden. There humanity chose to do the right thing for the wrong reason in order to gain power. Jesus chooses to do differently and let God be his source of power: a power with, not a power over. We stand now on the threshold of another Lent, a time to choose again. Will we choose differently because we have come to a deeper trust in God's unconditional love?



Mt 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was **led up by the Spirit** into the **wilderness** to be **tempted by the devil**. 2 He **fasted forty days and forty nights**, and afterwards he as **famished**. 3 The **tempter** came and said to him, "**If you are the Son of God**, **command these stones** to become loaves of **bread**."

4 But he answered, "**It is written**, 'One does not **live by bread** alone, but by every **word** that comes from the mouth of God.' 5 Then the **devil** took him to the **holy city** and placed him on the **pinnacle of the temple**, 6 saying to him, "**If you are the Son of God**, throw yourself down; for it is **written**, 'He will command his **angels** concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will **bear you up**, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "**Again it is written**, 'Do not put the Lord your **God to the test**.'" 8 Again, the **devil** took him to a very high **mountain** and showed him all the **kingdoms of the world** and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, "All these **I will give you**, if you will fall down and **worship me**." 10 Jesus said to him, "**Away with you, Satan!** for it is written, '**Worship the Lord** you God, and serve only him.'" 11 Then the **devil** left him, and suddenly **angels came** and waited on him.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus' temptations all started with the word IF. Do any of your temptations start with the word IF?

**PRAYER:** Lord, over and over the "world" tempts me to believe that it contains all my possibilities. I only have to stay within those possibilities to stay secure, powerful and a person of worth. Help me to recognize the temptation to limit myself to those false choices, so that I might find the real me that you are creating me to be. Help me also to witness to what a life lived in the confidence of your love could be, so that others will find you through me. Amen.

### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**LED UP BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS:** Jesus has just come from hearing the words that he is the beloved Son of God. Now the Spirit sends him into the wilderness to check out if he really understands what that means.

*Where do you go to check out your understanding of what God is about in your life?*

**TEMPTED:** Jesus is being offered a fail safe way of success by the tempter if he buys into the "worlds" understanding of success..

*How vulnerable are you to an offer of a pain/suffering free solution to a problem or challenge? Have you been led down the wrong path by such a temptation?*

**DEVIL / SATAN:** In Jesus' day, many believed that Satan was given the temporal world of space and time to do with as he wished. Therefore, anything in this world was under his control.  
*Is this belief still present today? If you think yes, how does this influence your choices? If not, what difference does this make?*

**FASTED:** A hungry person is a vulnerable person. Other needs get pushed back until this one is met.  
*What 'hungers' exist in you that could make you vulnerable to temptation to betray your truth?*

**40 DAYS AND NIGHTS:** 40 is the number used in scripture (over 45 times) to indicate that a significant change is about to happen. It is often seen as a dangerous period where the right decision is uncertain.  
*Can this Lenten period be a time of transition to a deeper understanding of God's will for your life? How?*

**IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD:** This question goes to the heart of the matter. Jesus can only be the Son of God if he fully accepts God's love for him without any reservation.  
*How can the various temptations offered (physical satisfaction of needs, power, glory), attack Jesus' faith in God's love?*

**COMMAND:** Here Jesus is tempted to use his faith in God to set aside his own Incarnation as son of man who shares our human limits.  
*If he had done this, how would your understanding of God be different?*

**IT IS WRITTEN:** Jesus goes to his own scriptures to find his understanding of God and God's will.  
*Do you also go to the scriptures for these reasons?*

**STONES /BREAD / LIVE BY BREAD:** Stones are often used as an example of a non-living thing. They are good for setting up an either/or challenge. Bread is an example of one form of life nourishing another.  
*Compare the 'stones' of Satan's words to the 'bread' of God's word in this text. What insights do you find?*

**HOLY CITY / HIGH MOUNTAIN:** These are two places historically associated with being close to God. They are places where you can see the bigger picture.  
*Where do you go to see farther and deeper into God's will for your life?*



(Church on the Pinnacle of the Temple: Built on the southeastern corner of the Temple Mount is attested on a Madaba map and in an account by a mid-sixth-century pilgrim. *Biblical Archaeological Review*: March/April 1998, Page 45-5.)

**PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE:** It was believed that the Messiah would appear on the pinnacle of the temple when he came.  
*What understanding of Messiah is this belief proclaiming? Why do you think Jesus rejects it?*

**GOD TO THE TEST:** The age-old question of humanity; "Does God really care about me" is hidden here. Satan wants Jesus to ask God for proof of God's love.  
*In what ways do people today 'put God to the test'? If you do it, how do you do it?*

**KINGDOM OF THE WORLD:** The "world" is a metaphor for all that exists in space and time. Those who limit their reality to these dimensions are those who do not believe in a life beyond life.  
*Are you aware of 'unbelief's' in your faith life? How can this Lent help to move you to belief?*

**I WILL GIVE YOU:** The "ruler of space and time" knows that this offer is fail safe if Jesus will only limit himself to the conditions offered. It is the timeless temptation of doing the right thing for the wrong reasons.  
*How often are you lured into doing the right thing for the wrong reasons? What makes the lure so successful?*

**WORSHIP ME / WORSHIP THE LORD:** Worship me, equals limiting oneself to space and time. Worshipping God removes that limit.

*How can your Lenten practice help to remove any limits in your faith life this year? What are the ways you have chosen to engage this growth process?*

**AWAY WITH YOU:** Jesus clearly sees the falsity of the “offers/temptations” proposed by the ruler of space and time. *What do you think enabled him to come to this clarity, so as to be able to put away these temptations?*

**ANGELS CAME:** These heavenly messengers come to Jesus’ aid once he becomes very clear about his direction. *Have you ever called someone an ‘angel’? Why did you do that? Can you see any association with this scripture as you remember such an incidence in your own life?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 4: 1f // Mk. 1:12f; Lk. 4:1f; Heb. 2:18; **Mt. 4:2** // Ex. 24:18; 34:28; **Mt. 4:4** // Dt. 8:3; **Mt. 4:6** // Ps. 91:11f; **Mt. 4:7** // Dt. 6:31; **Mt. 4:9** // Mt.16: 16, 23; **Mt. 4:10** // Dt. 6:13; **Mt. 4:11** // Jn. 1:51;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Gn. 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Ps. 51: 3-6, 12-14, 17; Rom. 5:12-19; Mt. 4: 1-11; Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 2:5-17; 3:1-7; Ps. 32; Rom. 5:12-19; Mt. 4:1-11;

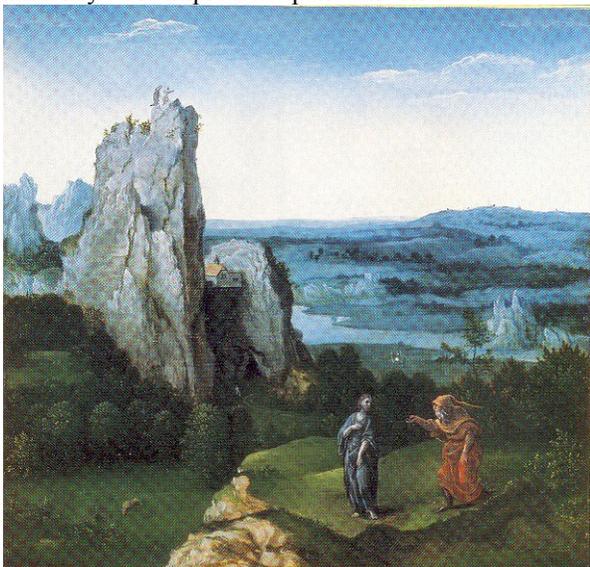
#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

The numerical value of the letters in the word “Satan” (Hebrew: *Hasatan*) is 364, the total number of days in a year, less one. Satan can accuse the Jewish people and lead them astray every day of the year, with the exception of Yom Kippur. On that day the Holy One, praised be He, says to Satan, “You have no power over them today. Nevertheless, to and see what they are doing.” When Satan finds them all fasting and praying, clothed in white garments like angels, he immediately return in shame and confusion. The Holy One ask him, “How are My children?” Satan answers, “They are like angels, and I have no power over them.” Thereupon the Holy One, praised by He, puts Satan in chains and declares to His people, “I have forgiven you.. Pg. 196 Hertzberg, Arthur. [Judaism](#). NY. Touchstone Books. 1991.

#### ***Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: The First Christian Account***

In 333 a pilgrim from the city of Bordeaux, in Gaul (modern France), wrote a personal account of a journey to the Holy Land. Today, this text is the earliest extant pilgrimage account by a Christian. Unfortunately, the pilgrim failed to sign the account, so he (or she, as some scholars suggest) is remembered only as the Pilgrim of Bordeaux. The journal lists 300 places where the pilgrim stopped on the way to and from Jerusalem. At first, the pilgrim records the journey simply, giving only the name of each site, its distance from the previous stop, and a brief note about whether it is a city or an inn or just a place to change horses.

Here is also the corner of an exceeding high tower, where our Lord ascended and the tempter said to Him “If you are the Son of God cast yourself down from here.” And the Lord answered, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God, but him only shall thou serve” Mt. 4: 1-11. There is a great comer-stone, of which it was said “The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.” Mt. 21:42; quoting Ps. 118: 22. Under the pinnacle of the tower are many rooms, and here was Solomon's palace. There also is the chamber in which he sat and wrote the [Book of] Wisdom; this chamber is covered with a single stone. There are also large subterranean reservoirs for water and pools constructed with great labor. And in the building itself, where stood the Temple which Solomon built, they say that the blood of Zacharias which was shed upon the stone pavement before the altar remains to this day. There are also to be seen the marks of the nails in the shoes of the soldiers who slew him, throughout the whole enclosure, so plain that you would think they were impressed upon wax. There are two statues of Hadrian, and not far from the statues there is a perforated



stone, to which the Jews come every year al!-d anoint it, bewail themselves with groans, rend their garments, and so depart. There also is the house of Hezekiah King of Judah. Demsky, Aaron. *Christian & Jesiwh Views of the Holy Land*. [Bible Review](#). 10/02. Pgs. 36-37.

The Temptation of Christ early 16th century, by Joachim Patinir (Upton House, Bearsted Collection, Banbury, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom)

Jesus and temptation is an almost bewildering concept, and Patinir grasps its enigmatic strangeness. He is a painter of the bird's-eye view, always gazing down from an impossible height. Here Jesus, too, is at an impossible height-"a very high mountain," says Mt. 4: 8 - and the devil, loathsome in a

monk's habit through which the fires of Hell are glowing, offers him the immensity of the world. Patinir does not paint much of its kingdoms, although there is the odd building here and there, but we clearly see its vastness and its beauty. Jesus is all rejection. He will indeed gain this forbidding world, but the somber hues of his robe suggest to us that it will be by dying.

Beckett, Sr., Wendy. Sister Wendy's Top Twenty Biblical Paintings. [Bible Review](#). 1/2005. Pg. 25.

Mt. 4:5- Gosp. Accor. Hebrews--To Jerusalem instead of holy city

Mt. 4:8--Origin, Homily on Jer. 15:4--Then my mother, the Holy spirit, took me by one of my hairs, and carried me to the great Mount Tabor. (Jerome records the above ref. in Latin in commentaries on Mi. 7:7)

This is exactly what Jesus does in the forty days in the wilderness: He goes to a place of emptiness. And it says: He fasted for forty days, meaning, he made himself empty. He stared down the demon who told him, "You have to be successful." And he answered, "No, I don't need that." When he stood on the pinnacle of the temple, he stared down the second who told him, "You have to be on the right religious track." This demon could quote Scripture! And Jesus said: "Get lost. I don't need this game." Finally he met the demon who told him, "You can do the will of God with the tools of power." But the price of power is falling down before Satan.

We all have to start from the assumption that our path too leads into the wilderness and that we have to look exactly the same three demons in the eye: the need to be successful, the need to be righteous or religious, and the need to have power and get everything under control. Until we have stared down these three demons within us, there is no possibility of getting out of the wilderness and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Otherwise we'll always be proclaiming our own kingdom. We use the Gospel to enthrone ourselves, and then the inner and the outer ways split apart. God calls all of you to take the path of the inner truth - and that means taking responsibility for everything that's in you: for what pleases you and for what you're ashamed of, for the rich person inside you and for the poor one. Francis of Assisi called this, "loving the leper within us." If you learn to love the poor one within you, you'll discover that you have room to have compassion "outside" too, that there's room in you for others, for those who are different from you, for the least among your brothers and sisters.

Less really is more. Only those who have nothing to prove and nothing to protect, those who have in them a space big enough to embrace every part of their own soul can receive the Christ. And Christ himself will lead us on this path. Pgs. 169-70. Rohr, Richard. [Simplicity: the Art of Living](#). NY. Crossroad. 1992.

All glorious, let alone magical, prerogatives are rejected as demonically inspired deviations from true sonship (Mt. 4: 1-11). He will truly obey his Father's will as he determines to live without divine protection and in the end submit to a cross and grave where even his Father's love is cast in doubt. Pg. 122.

Christians who contemplate such worldly unrighteousness in order to oppose the world's unrighteousness must do so with discernment and restraint, in the spirit of the weakness of the cross itself, so that it is not their own moral courage, spiritual heroics, or sacrificial martyrdom that the world admires or they themselves boast of Mt. 4:5ff. Pg. 400.

Lewis, Alan E. [Between Cross and Resurrection](#). Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001.

The gospel narrative makes a stunning claim about the sovereignty that Rome protects so violently. The narrative reveals that behind Rome's pretensions to sovereignty is another power, that of Satan. In the temptation scene 4: 1-11, Satan offers *Jesus* control of "all the kingdoms/empires (*basileia*) of the world" if *Jesus* will worship Satan (4:8-9). The offer is astounding. It expresses Satan's claim to control the world's empires, to have them at his disposal and under his rule. Rome's empire is viewed as devilish and diabolical, an expression of Satan's sovereignty. Further, Satan uses the same noun, "empire" or "kingdom" (*basileia*), in making this offer in 4:8 as *Jesus* uses when he begins his public ministry a few verses later. In a programmatic statement, *Jesus* proclaims that "the empire of the heavens" is at hand in his ministry (4:17). Both *Jesus* and Satan claim sovereignty and their claims collide. Moreover, Satan's demand that *Jesus* "worship" Satan is expressed in language that has very explicit political and military dimensions. The verb for "worship (*proskyneo*)" echoes the political practice of *proskynesis*. This practice involved the act of adoration or bowing in submission before a ruler or emperor. It signifies submission to Rome's military power. But *Jesus* refuses any such recognition of Satan's/Rome's sovereignty. And *Jesus* exhibits power over Satan, resisting and dismissing him (4:10-11). Subsequently, *Jesus* casts out demons as a display of God's empire and sovereignty (12:28), claims that in the resurrection God has given him all authority in heaven and on earth (28:18), and promises that finally in the judgment and new creation he will *overcome* all Satan's resistance (13:39-42). Pg. 62-3.

Carter, Warren. [Matthew and the Margins](#). NY. Orbis Books. 2000.

In the *Protoevangelion of James* in chap. 1, we read of John the Baptist's father, Joachim, who is desolate because he and his wife Anna have no son. He recalls Abraham and Sarah and decides to go to the wilderness to pray and fast. He spends 40 days and nights in his tent and vows not to eat or drink until "the Lord my God shall look down upon me" and answer my prayer.

In the document of Tertullian: *Against Praxeas*, (late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> Cent.) the temptation accounts of Mt. 4:3 and Lk. 4:3 are found. This document deals with the beginnings of the development of the concept of the Trinity. Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY:Oxford Univ. Press. 1999. Pg. 225.

Ancient sources attribute over 300 homilies by Origen, of which 39 still survive. Written around 240 CE, these sermons were important in the early church's understanding of the Christ event. In Homily 6, chapter 5, we have another account of the temptation. "When the Savior was tempted by the devil himself, he never admitted that he was the son of God. He merely said, "It is not right for me to adore you or to turn these stones into loaves of bread or to throw myself down from a high place." He said that, but never said he was the Son of God. Then later on in his document called, *On First Principles*, Book 4, chapter 3, we find; "Even the gospels are full of passages of this kind, as when the devil takes Jesus up into a "high mountain" in order to show him from thence "the kingdoms of the whole world and the glory of them". Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY:Oxford Univ. Press. 1999. Page 374 & 427.

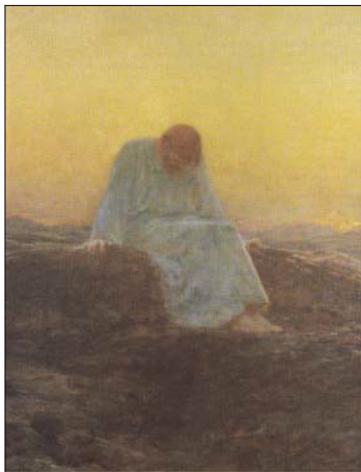
Jesus' three temptations were to be useful, to be important, and to be powerful. These three are the opposite of humility according to Henri Nouwen. Nouwen, Henri. [Bread For the Journey](#). NY: HarperSanFrancisco. 1977. Page 174.

Life is like a deck chair

Lucy and Charlie Brown are engaged in "heavy, deep, and real" conversation about the meaning of life. Lucy says that, "Life is like a deck chair. Some people place it so they can see where they are going. Some place it so they can see where they have been. And some place it so they can see where they are now." Charlie Brown thinks about Lucy's wisdom, then replies, "I can't even get mine unfolded."

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages; we are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet, it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stage of instability...and that it may take a very long time. If we hesitate, the rock remains dry, the sky black, the waters treacherous and swift. And we can hear the voice of our Master in the midst of our spoiled life: "O ye of little faith, why have you doubted me?" ([To be More](#) (Seuil), p. 88) Teilhard de Chardin "Trust in the Lord of the Journey"

But when it is said that man does not live by bread alone but "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," it is the whole man that is meant. Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *The Use of Art*. [Parabola](#). Fall 1991. Pages 4 ff.



Murphy-O'Conner, Jerome. [Triumph over Temptation: The Historical Core Behind the Testing of Jesus](#). [Bible Review](#). August, 1999. Pages 34 ff. Two illustrations in the guide are from this article. One of Jesus on the mountainside by Britton Riviere (1840-1920) titled "Christ in the Wilderness, and the other is an 11<sup>th</sup> century illumination in the Codex Aureus, at the Abbey of Echternach (Luxembourg) for Henry III in about 1055.

Who or what is Satan? Believers today are split as to whether or not they believe that Satan is an actual person or simply a symbol for a venomous power that can overwhelm you, strip you of moral strength, and leave you precisely with the feeling of having been beaten up. Either way, whether we believe that Satan is an actual person or simply a symbol for malevolence, temptation, and lack of moral strength, the encounters that the saints describe happen to us too in our rational, agnostic lives just as surely as they happened to pious believers in former times. Satan, scripture tells us, is the prince of jealousy, bitterness, paranoia, obsession, and lies. Few things in life torment us and beat us up as badly as these. They lurk in every dark corner, come out from under our beds at night, generally threaten us, darken our days, dampen our joys, and make us anxious as to what might lie around

the corner. We just word things differently. Fr. Ron Rolheiser "[Get Behind Me Satan](#)"

As one who strives to cast out an evil thought gains a great reward in heaven, so he who does not consent to good inspirations runs a grave risk of falling into great evils. Ignatius Loyola

Ideology can become a mental straightjacket that warps, bridles, and hardens, in order to justify the unjustifiable. 79  
Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. [The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies](#). Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

Just as the gardener who does not weed his garden chokes his vegetables, so the intellect that does not purify its thoughts I wasting its efforts. St. Thalassios the Libyan

### **The fruit**

It must have tasted sweet; / Had it been sour / Who would have eaten it? / Satan himself is charming / And not dour.  
So the unwary / Into death are hurled / By the delicious poisons / Of the world.

Edith Lovejoy Pierce Christian Century March 9, 1994 page 256

The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason. (Murder in the Cathedral, Part 1.  
T.S. Eliot

When the devil meets with a too delicate conscience, he tries to make it much more delicate, and to reduce it to extreme distress, so that it may be so wretchedly disturbed as at last to fall out of the race for spiritual improvement. Ignatius Loyola

If, when caught up in the seductive power of dark desire, we can invoke our empathy and compassion for those who will be harmed by our answering its call, perhaps we may be able to resist its dangerous consequences. Pg. 43  
Mickelson, Jane L. The Dark Side of Desire. Parabola, Fall 2019

I believe that all would-be Christians must face the same three temptations as Jesus did. These same demons are in all of us. The first temptation of Christ was to turn stones into bread ([Matthew 4:3](#)). Sounds good, but this is likely our need to be immediately impressive and effective, successful, relevant, and make things happen right now. It is our natural desire to look good. The false self tells you what it immediately wants and seldom knows what it really needs. You can be a very popular and successful person when you operate at this level, and you will easily think very well of yourself. That is why Jesus has to face that temptation first, to move us beyond what we first want to what we really need. In refusing to be immediately relevant, in refusing to respond to people's immediate requests, Jesus says, Go deeper. What do you really desire? It is not usually what you first think. "It is not by bread alone that we live" ([Matthew 4:4](#)). Richard Rohr

### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Fitzpatrick, Mother Gail, OCSO. [Seasons of Grace: Wisdom from the Cloister](#). Chicago. ACTA Pub. 2000. Pages 26ff. Chapter on Food and the role of fasting. in the practice of the spiritual life.

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1980. **WATERS**: Pages 185-88.

Freeman, Sean. [Parables, Psalms, Prayers](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1985.

### **TWELVE THINGS TO GIVE UP FOR LENT:**

Having to have the last word.	Taking those you love for granted.
Losing your temper.	Complaining.
Patronizing people who work for or with you.	Nagging.
Expecting to be bored by any and all sermons.	Thinking about money.
Feeling sorry for yourself.	Carrying grudges
Worrying about things you cannot change or control	Trying to be a perfectionist.

### **GREAT IMPOSTOR**

I put off what I have to do / with just another cup, / and all those postponed duties / my how they add up.  
Easy to say, "Get behind me," / if he came in horns and tail. / Disguised as just another cup, / his tactics seldom fail.  
Mary C. Ferris. NCR 8/13/99