



FACE TO FACE

The Holy Season of Lent prepares us for more than just the annual remembrance and celebration of the Lord's Resurrection on Easter Sunday. It prepares us with the help of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, to face the devil and (as we recite in the Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel) *all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls*. Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and our own (not always) Sacred experiences teach us that those evil spirits are "legion", and that our face to face encounters with them are not unique to us (cf. Saint Mark V:9). A brief remembrance of the *I Sunday of Lent* reveals to us that Jesus Himself was led by the Spirit into the desert to be "tempted by the devil".

The demons we face may not be tempting us to *turn these stones into loaves of bread*, but could they be tempting us to think that we can live without *every word that comes forth from the mouth of God*? Could we be tempted to think that we do not need to know what is written?

The demons we face may not be tempting us to *throw ourselves down from temple parapets*, but could they be tempting us to put God to the test? Could we be tempted to think that we can force God to demonstrate His power and save us when we willingly and freely put ourselves in dangerous situations, where-in God would have to intervene to save us? For example when we know the dangers of dressing promiscuously, drinking alcohol, going to an "R"-rated movie, or even watching certain television programs, yet we choose with free will to do these things anyway thinking that either: "I know when to say when." or "God won't let anything happen to me.": we are guilty of putting God to the test.

The demons we face may not call us to *prostrate ourselves and worship the devil* in return for *all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence*, but could they be tempting us to give more of our time, talent, and treasure along with our blood, sweat, and tears to acquiring those kingdoms than we offer in pursuit of God's kingdom. Could we in fact be tempted to put these kingdoms before the Kingdom of God and His righteousness forgetting that "all these things will be given you besides"? (Saint Matthew VI:33)

Ready or not we are going to meet demons. No sooner do our eyes open from sleep, than we are met with a fast-moving torrent of activities (some necessary, some not) waiting to sweep us away like Martha, and before you know it we're irritable, frustrated, annoyed, bitter, complaining, and blaming others for the state we find ourselves in. Once caught up in the rapids, it is difficult to *exercise* (although we seem to always find time for other types of *exercise*) the weapons of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that the Holy Season of Lent offers us. And so, even before your feet (or better yet your knees) hit the floor, have a face to face conversation with Jesus; yes even while you're in bed. He knows about meeting demons and He knows how to conquer them. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, you will conquer yours: face to face!

