

Life often feels as though something is missing. No matter our circumstances, we tell ourselves: if I just had the right job, more financial security, a bigger house in a better neighborhood—then everything would be all right. Then I would want for nothing. Our consumer culture reinforces this message that fulfillment is just one more purchase away. Yet as soon as one desire is satisfied, another quickly takes its place. We live in a constant cycle of “more.” It seems to be part of the human condition.

That is precisely the lie the serpent introduced in the Garden. Adam and Eve were surrounded by abundance, walking in communion with God, and yet the tempter whispered, “You are missing something. If you eat of that tree, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods.” In other words: your world is not complete. God is holding out on you. Take what you need, and you will finally be fulfilled.

The irony in all of this is that what we desire and what God desires for us are, in a sense, the same. We long to be without want, to have every desire satisfied. And God created us for nothing less. But that fulfillment comes only in union with Him, not through the accumulation of more stuff or by eliminating every source of difficulty in this life. As St. Athanasius famously said, “The Son of God became man so that we might become God.” What the devil falsely promised through grasping, namely, that Adam and Eve could become gods, God truly gives to us through grace. But it must be received as gift, not seized as possession.

When we try to grasp fulfillment on our own terms, our hearts remain restless. Yet God’s gift is already at work within us. At baptism we received the Holy Spirit—the very life of God dwelling in our souls. St. Paul calls the Spirit the “first fruits” (Rom 8:23), a down payment of the glory to come. Our souls have already tasted the goodness of God, and they desire more. That restless desire for

“more” is not wrong in itself; it is a distorted expression of our deeper longing for God. The theological virtue of hope, which only comes to us as a gift from God, is intended to remind us that God’s promises to us will be fulfilled, in fact, they are already being fulfilled in our lives, if we but open our hearts to the fulfilment.

The Church strengthens us in this hope. Through the sacraments, the Spirit continues to shape our hearts, attuning us to His movements and giving us strength to resist temptation. Lent is not about suppressing desire; it is about purifying it.

That brings us to today’s Gospel.

Where Adam grasped, Christ receives. Where Adam doubted the Father’s goodness, Jesus rests in it completely. Led by the Spirit into the desert, weakened by forty days of fasting, Jesus confronts the same ancient lie: You are missing something. The Father is holding out on you. Take matters into your own hands.

“Turn these stones into bread.”

“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.”

“All these kingdoms I will give you...”

These are not temptations to obvious evil. They are invitations to secure good things—food, safety, authority—but apart from trust in the Father. They are invitations to seize rather than to receive.

Each time, Jesus responds not with dramatic displays of power, but with humble obedience:

“Man does not live by bread alone.”

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

“The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.”

In other words: “I already have everything I need in my Father.”

Jesus reveals what a human heart fully alive looks like—a heart that does not grasp because it knows it is already loved; it is already fulfilled.

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we do not have a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Jesus knows temptation from the inside. He knows the whisper that says, “You need more. You deserve more. God is not enough.”

When we turn to Jesus in our weakness, we are not turning to someone distant or indifferent. We are turning to One who has stood in the desert and remained faithful—and who now strengthens us from within.

That is why Lent is not a season of grim self-improvement. It is not about proving our discipline. It is about learning again that we cannot save ourselves. The more we recognize our need for Christ, the more space we make for grace.

The Holy Spirit—the first fruits already given to us—works precisely in that humility. He purifies our desires. He teaches our hearts to hunger not merely for material possessions, power, or approval, but for communion with God.

Our fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are not punishments. They are training. They expose the lie that something essential is missing from our lives. They teach us to say, with Christ, The Father is enough.

We are on pilgrimage. The desert is real. Temptations are real. But so is grace. The same Spirit who led Jesus into the desert now dwells within us. The same Father who sustained His Son sustains us.

If we cling to Christ—especially in moments of weakness—the Spirit will purify our hearts, strengthen our resolve, and guide us home. For what the serpent falsely promised—to be like God—the Father truly gives, not by grasping but by grace. And one day, when our pilgrimage ends, every restless desire will finally be fulfilled in Him.