



22. February 2026

## LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT

### Day 5: “Take advantage of grace and resist temptations”

*“We entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, ‘At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.’ Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”* (2 Cor 6:1–2)

With this exhortation, St. Paul introduces us to the first Sunday of Lent and offers an essential guideline for advancing on the path undertaken in this time of grace. In ancient times, Lent began precisely on this Sunday. It was considered a “second gateway” to this great season of penance, after having passed through the first gateway on Ash Wednesday. If we start from the concept of the “second gate,” then we would read the following inscription in gold letters above it: *“Take advantage of the time of grace.”*

With the healthy reminder of our limited condition as creatures—“You are dust, and to dust you shall return”—we receive the impetus to embark on this path of conversion. Now, as we pass through the “second gate,” we are exhorted to be vigilant in order to take advantage of this favorable time. It is true that, since Jesus came into the world and, especially, since His death and resurrection, the “time of grace” has begun and the doors of God's heart are always wide open to us. However, within this great *kairos*, there are certain stages in which God's grace is offered to us in a concentrated way. Lent is precisely one of them.

Therefore, let us not grow weary or fall asleep along the way. Rather, let us try to accumulate enough oil in reserve, like the wise virgins who were prepared even though the Bridegroom was delayed (cf. Mt 25:1–13). And let us never forget that our entire history is moving toward the second coming of Christ. May He find us waiting for Him and serving as good workers in His vineyard when He returns.

In today's reading (I strongly recommend reading it in its entirety: 2 Cor 6:1–10), St. Paul declares: *“As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: (...) by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left”*.

With these words, the Apostle to the Gentiles alludes to the spiritual combat we are called to wage as disciples of the Lord. In the Letter to the Ephesians, he describes it in more detail (Eph 6:10–18) and makes it clear that the enemies we face are *“the*

*principalities, the powers (...) and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (v. 12). This battle is clearly shown in today's Gospel (Mt 4:1–11), in which Jesus Himself is tempted by the devil after fasting for forty days.

The Lord rejected the three temptations He endured on our behalf, so that we too might be able to resist in His name. At the same time, He left us an example of how to face the devil's insidious attacks.

Let us take a closer look at the last temptation, in which Satan's pretensions are clearly manifested.

First of all, we must bear in mind that the devil is a fallen angel with a presumptuous spirit. At one time, he occupied a high rank in the angelic hierarchy and was a glorious angel. To this day, we can deeply regret his fall. However, we must know that he turned away from God out of pride and with full awareness, thus becoming totally perverse and evil. In his blindness, Satan clings to his claim to compete with God and attempts to usurp His place on earth.

*“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’”* (Mt 4:8–9).

The Son of God was not seduced by this temptation and rejected it for us: *“Begone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”* (v. 10).

The devil's presumption is clearly manifested in the fact that, despite being only a creature, he aspires to be worshipped. All the seductions with which he approaches human beings must be understood against this background, even though he often hides his true intention to deceive them. Having rebelled against God and disobeyed Him, he now wants to drag human beings—God's beloved children—into the same disobedience.

How often do people succumb to the temptation of power and, worse still, to the abuse of power? How often do those who are very “successful” in the world and have great influence over others fall into pride if they are not firmly rooted in the faith, which alone can protect them from such traps?

Pride is our great enemy, which easily closes our hearts and inflates us from within. It is

not always easy to identify it in ourselves. Therefore, it is advisable to ask the Lord to reveal any kind of pride in us so that we can then present it to Him and ask Him to help us overcome it, without falling into blindness toward ourselves.

The devil cannot stand a humble heart—a heart like the one he found in Jesus in the desert—because with the strength of His Lord, it will be able to counteract any temptation of pride with Jesus’ own words: *“Begone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”*

If we cultivate authentic humility, which attributes everything to God, which vigilantly follows the path of imitation of Christ, and which makes good use of all the graces offered to us, we will be able to reject the devil with the strength of the Lord, because *“God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* (1 Cor 10:13)

The flower of today's meditation: take advantage of the time of grace and fight against pride.

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**Meditation on the Gospel of the day:** <https://en.elijamission.net/the-temptations-of-jesus/>