

Father O'Connor's Homily for 9 March 2025  
First Sunday of Lent-C

Deuteronomy 26: 4-10  
Romans 10: 8-13  
Luke 4: 1-13

Advice columnist Ann Landers invited her readers to submit lies that people often tell. Here are some of them:

“You made it yourself? I never would have guessed!”

“You don't look a day over forty!”

“Put away that map. I know exactly where I'm going!”

“Of course I'll respect you in the morning!”

“You don't need this in writing. You have my personal guarantee!”

“It's so delicious, but I just can't eat another bite!”

Lies...we hear them so often. And a lie is at the bottom of nearly every sin we commit.

In today's Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent, Jesus goes out to the desert to fast and pray. And we hear about the devil coming to Jesus and tempting Him with three big lies.

In the first temptation the lie is: “If it feels good, just do it.”

Jesus had been fasting for forty days and forty nights, and He was hungry. The devil says to Him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

Jesus was in the desert to be alone with His Heavenly Father. The devil wanted Him to call His retreat experience short by working a self-serving miracle. “Who cares what your Heavenly Father wants? You are hungry now, aren't you? If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

If it feels good, just do it.

We have all had desert experiences, and maybe you are there right now: a setback in health, the death of a loved one, a divorce, a dream that has crashed and burned. There are lots of deserts, and the lie comes to us: “You deserve something for yourself. If it feels good, just do it.”

Yet the voice of God says to us, “Here is a graced opportunity for Me to renew you. Listen to My voice. I am with you.”

That is the first temptation – to command a stone to become bread – with its lie: “If it feels good, just do it.”

The second temptation is also based on a lie: “Grab the moment and forget about the eternal consequences.”

The devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth in an instant. “I shall give you all this power and glory.... I may give it to whomever I wish.” [That is another lie. These things do not belong to the devil at all.] “All this will be yours, if you worship me,” said the devil.

“Grab the moment and forget about the eternal consequences.” If Jesus had fallen for that lie He would never have gone to His cross. And then where would you and I be right now? Unredeemed and left in our sins.

But Jesus didn't fall for that temptation – to grab the moment and forget about the eternal consequences. Jesus always lived the present moment with its eternal significance in mind.

The third temptation carries this lie: “Look out for number one, because if you don't, nobody else will.”

The devil took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and led Him up a high tower and said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He will command His angels... to guard you... lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” What was the devil tempting Jesus to do? To be a celebrity miracle-worker.

But Jesus did not come into this world to look out for Himself. He came to be our Savior by laying down His life for us on the cross. He made Himself the last of all and the servant of all, and taught us, by His example, to do the same.

These three lies of the devil are still with us, aren't they? “If it feels good, do it.” “Grab the moment and forget about the eternal consequences.” “Look out for number one, because if you don't, nobody else will.”

There is another lie that is still with us and is perhaps even more destructive than the other three: “You really can't trust God.”

Ever feel that way: being alone in a desert, feeling powerless, unsure where to go? ...and thinking, “I really can't trust God”?

I was thinking about my mother and father, and remembering my mother's fortieth birthday. As she was approaching that birthday she was also expecting my little brother, the sixth child in our family. Turning forty and being pregnant – she wasn't happy about either one.

My parents were absolutely pro-life – so having this baby wasn't a question. But even being pro-life didn't mean that my mother was really excited about turning forty and being pregnant. Christopher was born in

July, right before I was entering my senior year in high school. And being the firstborn of the six of us children, I am seventeen years older than he is.

I remember that fortieth birthday of my mother two weeks after Chrystopher's birth. She did not want a party. We got her a cake and she was not pleased.

Six years later, my father died of cancer [melanoma] at the age of 44. My mother told me so many times thereafter how grateful she was to God for the birth of Chrystopher. After my father's death, she had a little boy to love and care for, and that God could not have blessed her more richly.

She had trusted in God even when she didn't feel like trusting in God. When we trust in God it doesn't always mean that everything is immediately going to be just the way we want it. But God will work out His own purposes, in His own good time and in His own good way..... The lesson? The invitation? Trust in God.

There is a wonderful Gospel hymn that carries this theme. It reminds us to look at the cross and see the arms of the suffering Christ outstretched in a loving welcome for all of us, for every single one of us. The hymn is entitled, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*. Here is verse three:

What have I to dread, what have I have to fear,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms?  
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.  
Leaning, leaning,  
Safe and secure from all alarms.  
Leaning, leaning,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Whatever desert you may be in right now, know that God is with you. Whatever voices of deception tempt you, listen for His voice of truth. Trust Him. Our Lord's arms on the cross are wide open to welcome you, to embrace you. There is room for you in His arms:

Leaning, leaning,  
Safe and secure from all alarms.  
Leaning, leaning,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.