Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/

1st Sunday of Lent

Date: Sunday, March 9, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C
First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4–10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 91:1–2, 10–15 | **Response:** Psalm 91:15b
Second Reading: Romans 10:8–13
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 4:4b
Gospel Reading: Luke 4:1–13
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We stand at the gates of Lent—an annual invitation to *rethink*, *reorient*, and *recommit* ourselves to the path of God's grace. This is no mere exercise of denial; it is, in its highest form, a spiritual pilgrimage—a journey into the wilderness of our own hearts. It is a call to see, with new eyes, the bounty of grace that surrounds us, even in the midst of life's trials.

In the ancient tradition, Moses speaks to the people of Israel, commanding them to offer the first fruits of the harvest to the Lord. And in this simple, yet profound, act—an act so easily lost in the rush of modern life—we encounter a truth as old as creation itself: that all we have comes from God. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof*. Our very breath, the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the land we till—*all* are gifts of a benevolent Creator.

The words of the Israelites, recited as they present their offering, carry weight far beyond the ritual act. They are a confession, an acknowledgment of God's faithfulness through all the ages. "A wandering Aramean was my father," they say, tracing their lineage back to a time of exile and hardship. Here, the rabbis remind us, the *remembrance* of the covenant is as vital as the offering itself. It is in the act of remembering that we discover God's hand at work in our lives, shaping us through both struggle and grace.

And so, we must ask ourselves, how often do we forget the source of our blessings? How often do we *take for granted* the gifts God bestows, forgetting that we, like the Israelites, are called not only to receive but to *give thanks*—and to give back?

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-03mar-09-yc-lt-01/

Psalm 91 is a psalm of *trust*—trust in the protecting hand of God, trust in His care even when the world seems bent on destruction. The psalmist paints a picture of God as a *sheltering* presence, a shadow under which the righteous find refuge. This is not a promise of immunity from suffering, but a promise that in *suffering*, God will be with us.

And here, in the context of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, we see Psalm 91's promise echoed in the divine words of Jesus Himself. When Satan tempted Him to throw Himself down from the temple, Jesus refused—not out of distrust, but because He knew that true faith does not *test* God. True faith does not seek to *manipulate* the hand of the Almighty to fulfill our own desires.

The rabbis teach that faith is not about demanding signs, but about trusting *even when no sign appears*. God's protection is not a bargain for us to strike, but a gift for us to receive—and receive humbly. The Psalmist's words, then, become not just a comfort but a challenge. Do we trust in God's care when the world seems to abandon us?

And now, let us turn to the Gospel, where we find Jesus, freshly anointed by the Spirit at His baptism, driven into the wilderness to face the trials of the *adversary*. What we encounter here, friends, is not merely the struggle of Jesus, but a struggle we all face—the temptation to follow our own will, our own desires, and to set aside God's *higher* calling.

The first temptation, to turn stones into bread, speaks directly to a temptation we know well in our day: the temptation to *rely on ourselves*, to take control of our own fate. Jesus, however, responds with the words of Moses in Deuteronomy, reminding us that *man does not live by bread alone*, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Is there not, in our age, an almost relentless drive to secure material wealth, to find comfort and satisfaction in the things of this world? How often do we forget that the things we seek, the wealth we accumulate, the power we desire, will not fill the deepest longings of our souls?

In the second temptation, Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world, if only He would bow down and worship him. Ah, but Jesus, *the true King*, refuses. He knows that *all power* belongs to God alone, and He will not trade His mission

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-03mar-09-yc-lt-01/

for temporary glory. This, too, is the lesson for us: the temptation to seek power, prestige, and influence for their own sake. But Jesus shows us that true greatness comes from serving, not from being served.

And in the third temptation, Satan dares Jesus to jump from the temple, to throw Himself into the hands of God's protection, to perform a miraculous sign for the sake of spectacle. Again, Jesus rejects this, knowing that true faith is not about *demonstrating power* but about *living faithfully* in the quiet, hidden corners of life.

These temptations speak to us, brothers and sisters. How often do we bow to the false gods of self-sufficiency, power, or pride? Lent is the season in which we are called to reexamine our own temptations—to ask ourselves: where do we *turn* when the pressure mounts? Where do we seek refuge? The Gospel tells us that *only God* is worthy of our trust, and that true life comes not from the things we gather in this world, but from the *word* of God that nourishes us for eternal life.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminds us that salvation comes through faith—*faith confessed with the lips and believed in the heart*. This is the crux of the matter, my friends: we do not merely *say* that Jesus is Lord, we must *live* as though He is Lord. Faith, Paul reminds us, is not a passive belief but a living, breathing commitment that shapes our actions and our decisions.

Catholic Social Teaching echoes this truth: our faith must be expressed not in the abstract, but in the concrete actions of love, justice, and service. If we believe that Jesus is Lord, then we must live as though His Kingdom is already here—working for the common good, standing with the marginalized, and rejecting the false idols of self-interest and greed.

As we embark on this Lenten season, I offer you three questions for deep reflection:

1. Where in my life am I tempted to rely on my own strength rather than trust in God's provision?
2. How can I examine the ways in which I seek power or prestige, and what can I do to realign my priorities to serve God's Kingdom?
3. In what ways can I make my faith more tangible—by living it out through acts of justice, mercy, and love for the least of these?

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-03mar-09-yc-lt-01/

May this Lent be a time of genuine conversion, a time to strip away the distractions that pull us from God, and a time to renew our commitment to live as true disciples of the One who offers us life—*abundantly*.

And let us continue to keep Pope Francis in our prayer.

Amen.

Source: https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-03mar-09-yc-lt-01/

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **WhatsApp**

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **Telegram**

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **Signal**

Scan for Website on **Clearnet**

Scan for Onion Mirror **via TOR**

In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.