

# Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum

Sheila O'Connell-Roussell and  
Therese Vorndran Nichols  
Icons by Vicki Shuck

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All other scriptural material is freely paraphrased and is not to be used or understood as an official translation of the Bible. The first passage on page 107 is paraphrased from Isaiah 53:3–6, the second passage on page 107 from Isaiah 53:7, and the passage on page 121 from John 12:24–25.

Pope John Paul II's reflections about theater on page 8 are gleaned from *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*; translated by Boleslaw Taborski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

The extract on pages 8–9 is quoted from *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicum Actuositatem, 1965)*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M. Abbott, SJ (New York: Guild Press, 1966), number 12. Copyright © 1966 by American Press.

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The prayer on pages 79 and 121 is quoted from *The Sacramentary*, English translation prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1985), page 545. Illustrations and arrangement copyright © 1985–1974 by Catholic Book Publishing Company, New York.

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# Contents

Introduction	7	
Resource Intro–A: “Leader’s Tasks”		11

<b>Lent</b>		
First Sunday	12	
Second Sunday	22	
Third Sunday	32	
Fourth Sunday	42	
Fifth Sunday	52	
Passion Sunday, or Palm Sunday		60

<b>Easter Triduum</b>		
Holy Thursday	70	
Good Friday	80	
Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday		114

<b>Bibliography</b>	124	
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<b>Gospel Readings for the Lent and Easter Triduum Dramas</b>		126
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We dedicate this book to our daughters, Shana O’Connell-Christman, and Claire Therese, Caroline Mary, and Caitlin Elizabeth Nichols, who are the incentive, inspiration, and catalyst for all our work. It is our lifelong commitment to share with them our most precious treasure—the gift of faith in Jesus and his mother. We also want to instill in them our belief that they—like all the children of the earth—are cherished by God.

#### Authors’ Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the parishioners and pastoral staff of Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Parish in Bend, Oregon, for their faith and confidence in our work and for letting us try out this project in so many “corners” of the vineyard—youth ministry, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Scripture study, Re-membering Church, faith-sharing groups, liturgy of the word, classrooms, and as a journal for personal study.

In particular we would like to thank the youth of our parish who have sacrificed themselves to be our “test case” every Tuesday afternoon for the last two years. Early versions of this work were improved and clarified by their challenging comments. And much of our content has been developed in consideration of their questions and touching spiritual insights.

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## Introduction

### Our Goal

Faith development and the conversion process have at their source our human hunger to know God and to discover what it means to be fully human. Catholic Tradition celebrates our profound relationship with Christ, who is truly God and truly human. In *Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum* our goal as authors is to employ all our skills, talents, and passion to explore and communicate this mystery of the Incarnation to young people through the medium of drama.

### The Meaning of Lent and of the Easter Triduum

Although local customs in the universal church differ from country to country, since the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E., Catholic Christians have observed the season of Lent to prepare for the paschal mysteries of the Easter Triduum. This is the great season of conversion. Those of us raised in the faith look deeply into our soul and recommit ourselves to our baptismal vows and to Christ. Our catechumens (unbaptized persons who wish to join our family of faith) are in the final weeks of their journey toward the celebration of the sacraments of initiation: baptism, the Eucharist, and confirmation.

Through the readings of the season of Lent, we honor the forty days Jesus spent in the desert fasting, praying, giving alms, and offering acts of charity to God. We remember that our life—with its cares and joys—is temporary. Every one of us will one day die and stand before our God. Our actions go before us. Our Lord stands beside us. In Lent, we attempt to become more conscious, to mark and honor the cycles of our lives and to remember that in all we say and do, Christ is in our midst.

### The Power of Drama

One of the most powerful tools we have found for teaching, evangelizing, healing emotional wounds, inspiring changes of heart, and developing or enriching faith is the art of drama. We have experienced this firsthand through the strong, positive reactions to our two musical plays: *Herstory: The Mother’s Tale*, which tells the story of Jesus through the memories of his mother and the other disciples, and *Back to Eden*, which spotlights the

first man and woman, the glories of Creation, and God’s unending love for us. As writers, we have been awed by the ability of drama to bring these stories to life.

His holiness Pope John Paul II spent many years as a playwright, theater critic, and actor. In his various writings on the theater, he professes the highest regard for drama’s potential as a force for good. He observes that theater gives us insights that we cannot grasp in everyday life. Theater, he reflects, appeals not only to the mind but also to the senses and the heart, helping us to understand what it means to be fully human (Boleslaw Taborski, translator, *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*).

Each drama in this book is meant to “break open” a Gospel passage and bring it to life, especially when the reading is dramatized shortly before it will be read from the pulpit at Mass. For example, in “Out of the Darkness, into the Light,” the grieving sisters of Lazarus bemoan Jesus’ failure to reach Bethany in time to bless their brother before he died. They wonder where Jesus was when they needed him. After Jesus finally arrives, he cries at the tomb with them, then calls back to life the dead friend whom he loves. The vivid unfolding of this drama may shed new insights on both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus presented in the liturgy of the word for the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

In “Lamb of God, Bread of Life,” Jesus spends a beautiful evening with his closest friends. They gather together for Passover, the festival of freedom, a commemoration of the Exodus event in which God’s people were saved. This night, the night before his death, Jesus promises that the freedom and redemption of Passover will soon be fulfilled in a way that surpasses their dreams. As he breaks the unleavened bread, he promises that he will be with them, and us, all throughout time, in the breaking of the bread. The Holy Thursday liturgy—and the precious gift of holy communion—may become more meaningful, more personal because of the dialog and action in this scene.

In like fashion, the rest of the dramas from this book can make the Gospel teachings “take flesh” and pass into people’s hearts.

## Special Features

### Learning Style

Youth are the future of the church. They will hand on the flame of faith to succeeding generations. The teen and young adult years extend a magnificent challenge to those of us who are called to minister to youth as pastors, youth ministers, spiritual guides, mentors, teachers, parents, and guardians. In the prophetic text we know as the conciliar documents of Vatican II, the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* calls us not only to minister to young people but also to enable them to minister to one another:

Young persons exert very substantial influence on modern society. There has been a complete change in the circumstances of their lives, their mental attitudes, and their relationships with their own families. . . .

. . . As they become more conscious of their own personality, they are impelled by a zest for life and abounding energies to assume their own responsibility, and they yearn to *play their part* in social and cultural life. . . . *They themselves ought to become the prime and direct apostles of youth*, exercising the apostolate among themselves and through themselves and reckoning with the social environment in which they live. (No. 12; italics added)

*Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas* uses the medium of drama to empower young people and adults to embrace their baptismal privilege to be catechists for one another and for themselves. To accomplish this goal, the leader’s role in the presentation of the drama is purposefully minimal. Rather than lecturing, the leader simply provides the environment for learning.

The participants in the dramas function as catechist, lector, Gospel players, improv artists, small-group leaders, and audience. In these roles, the participants come in contact with a variety of images, emotions, moral dilemmas, and social settings, through which they meet flesh-and-blood persons and communities—imagined and historical—that encountered Jesus and the early church. Our intent is not only to teach the message of Jesus but also to weave within the icons, catechist sections, and role-playing, a sense of how the early community evangelized, articulated the roots of our sacramental celebrations, and developed the Gospels.

In combining use of the fine arts, the theater arts, and the arts of oral interpretation, speech, and improvisation with elements of cooperative learning, the participants share faith and teach one another about the liturgy and the Scriptures.

### Leader’s Tasks

General directions for the leader’s tasks are provided on a resource located at the end of this introduction. Directions and information that are unique to each drama are located within the respective dramas. Of special note is the preparation of a costume trunk that contains clothing and props. A list of items needed is included at the beginning of each drama.

### Icons

The icon for each drama is included not only for aesthetic value but also as an essential component of the learning experience. Although it is beneficial simply to experience and appreciate good art, as a learning tool an icon allows participants who are primarily visual learners to receive the information through a creative visual image. We intentionally used icons because they serve as an entry point to the sacred rather than as mere decoration for the page. We hope also that the use of icon art will encourage any developing artists in your midst to embrace their own vocation of celebrating spirituality through the arts.

The icons were created with a scratchboard technique. To use this technique, the artist begins with a black board. And like spiritual self-direction, in which a person consciously removes the darkness of resistance

to the light of God's love, the artist slowly scratches off layer after layer of the black surface until the sacred image emerges.

Directions for using the icons with the participants are given in the leader's tasks resource at the end of this introduction.

The artist's caption for each icon and the Scripture citation or citations on which the icon is based are located on the same page as the icon.

## Scheduling the Dramas

If you are a youth group leader or a catechist in a parish religious education program, *Lectioary-Based Gospel Dramas* can serve as a complete set of lessons to carry you from the first Sunday of Lent through Easter Sunday. As you meet with your group each time, drama after drama will draw your participants into the Gospel reading that awaits them in the upcoming Lenten or Easter Triduum liturgy. Usually youth groups and parish classes take a holiday break, just as schools do. If you do not have enough sessions to cover all the dramas, one option is to select certain dramas and save others for the following Lent and Easter. Another option is to incorporate elements from the dramas into special liturgies for your youth group or parishioners. You might even make certain dramas available for personal reflection at home, as an extension of your work together as a group.

If you are a schoolteacher, using the dramas once a week—especially on Fridays, when people are often tired—offers the students a solid yet fun entry into the world of the sacred Scriptures celebrated in the liturgies of the seasons. However, Easter vacations may break into that neat format. Use your judgment about the best timing for incorporating the dramas when this occurs. We also suggest that you adapt the dramas for use in any special liturgies and prayer services that you coordinate for the season.

The three dramas for the Easter Triduum present a problem for weekly parish programs and even for schools, because they relate to liturgies that occur within the same week. You may wish to spread these dramas out by using the Good Friday drama earlier during Lent, replacing one of the Lenten Sunday dramas. The Holy Thursday drama could be used the week before Holy Week or during Holy Week itself. The Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday drama could be used after Holy Week, when students return from Easter break, as a reflection on the great mystery of Christ's Resurrection.

## Our Gift and Our Hope

The icons and dramas in this book are the fruit of our study, meditation, and prayer. Using the personal reflections of our life journeys, as well as our experience in the classroom and parish ministry, we believe we have developed a teaching tool that will sustain, strengthen, and support you in your critical vocation of proclaiming the Gospel. Our belief is that the Gospel of Jesus has the power to transform lives. Our hope and prayer is that you find *Lectioary-Based Gospel Dramas* to be the gift that it has been to our teaching mission.

## Resource Intro–A

# Leader's Tasks

## Preparation for the Drama

1. Photocopy the script and distribute a copy to each participant.
2. Begin the session by inviting the participants to take a few minutes of silence to view and reflect on the icon.
3. Briefly explain the nature of icons and then lead a reflection and discussion using the following, or similar, words:

An icon is an image that invites us to see and enter into the realm of the Spirit. This icon is the artist's expression of the readings we celebrate today. As you gaze at the icon, what feelings, thoughts, ideas, or issues come to mind? How does the art make you feel? Would anyone like to share any of the thoughts or feelings that the icon inspires in them?

As part of the reflection and discussion, or as closure to the discussion, you might want to read the artist's icon caption from the bottom of the page.

4. After the group discussion subsides, ask participants to volunteer for the roles in the Gospel drama. The roles are listed with each drama. If your group is small, ask some volunteers to assume more than one role.
5. Direct the volunteers to search through the costume trunk for articles of clothing and props that will embellish their portrayal of the drama.



## Presentation of the Drama

Explain to the participants that throughout the drama, the catechist will stand before the group as narrator of the scene and minister of hospitality, who welcomes the audience, introduces the lector, and cues the players and the audience.

## Follow-up After the Drama

1. At the conclusion of the drama, ask the audience for a round of applause for the catechist, the lector, and the Gospel players.
2. Thank everyone, and invite the catechist to lead a discussion of the reflection questions. Assist the catechist by facilitating the group discussion when necessary and by adding your own comments. Reflection questions are provided for each drama.

## Improv

If time permits, direct the Gospel players to take ten minutes or so by themselves to prepare an improv that portrays, in a contemporary fashion, the teachings and main points of the day's discussion. When the Gospel players are ready, have them perform the improvised skit.

## Closure

1. Invite the participants' questions or comments prompted by the icon, the drama, the discussion, and the improvised skit.
2. Offer any closing comments or announcements. If the drama has taken place before the liturgy in which the dramatized Gospel passages will be read, remind the participants to be attentive to the readings during the celebration. If you are planning another Gospel drama for the next session, give the participants the Scripture readings for that drama so that they can read the passages in preparation for the next session.
3. Close the session by inviting the participants to offer a traditional or spontaneous closing prayer.

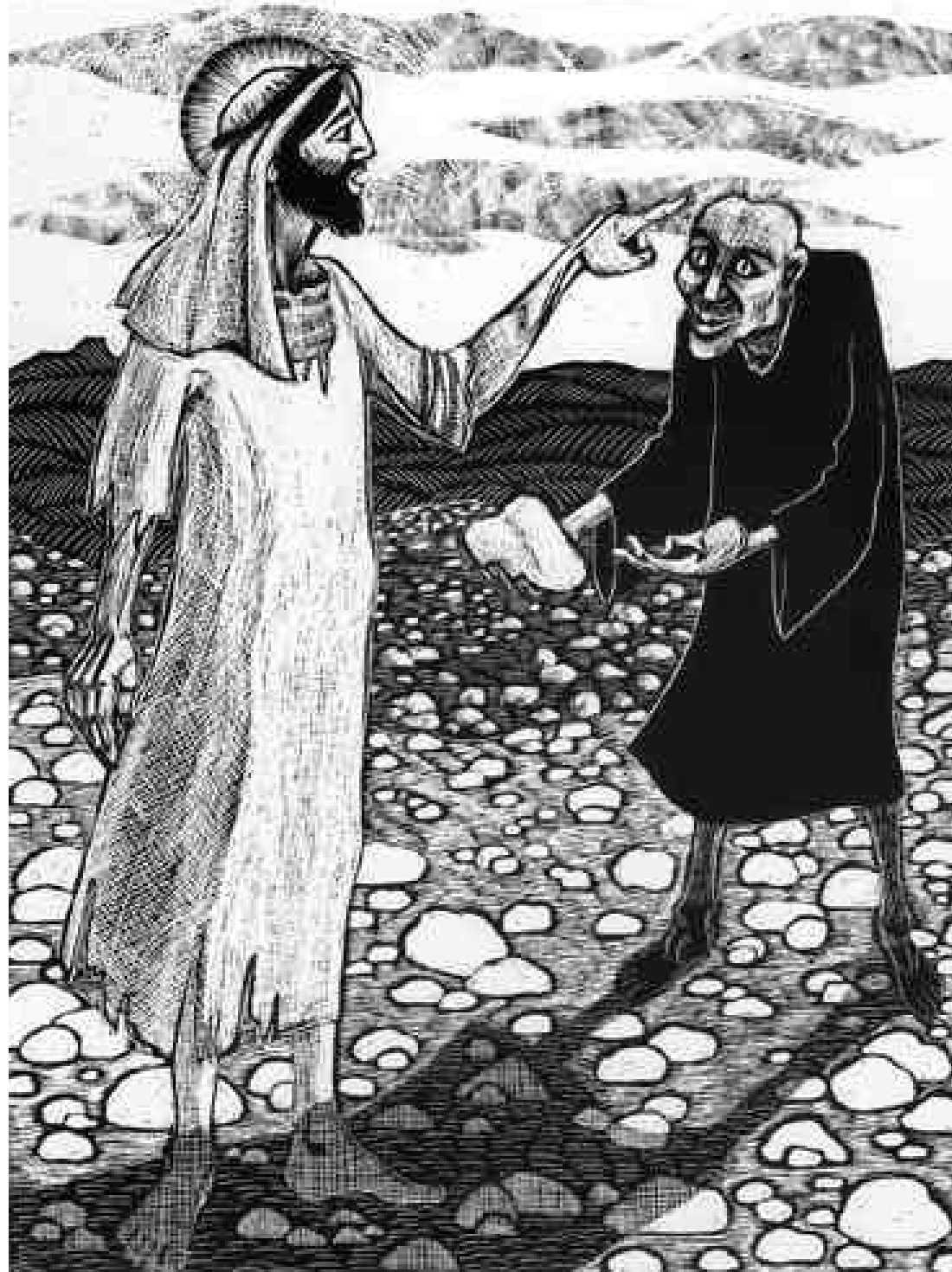


Illustration by Vicki Shuck

## First Sunday of Lent Icon

Filled with the Spirit and focused on his commitment to God, Jesus recognizes the voice of the Tempter. Even when we are weak, the Spirit helps us to hear the voice of God and gives us strength to stand up to temptations.

A: Matthew 4:1-11; B: Mark 1:12-15; C: Luke 4:1-13

# First Sunday of Lent

## Gospel Readings and Themes

*Cycle A. Matthew 4:1-11.* Tempted in the desert: preparation for the mission.

*Cycle B. Mark 1:12-15.* Put to the test: temptation in the desert.

*Cycle C. Luke 4:1-13.* Led by the Spirit: forty days and forty nights.

## Preparation for the Drama

(See resource intro-A, “Leader’s Tasks.”)

### Roles

*Catechist*, who coordinates the drama

*Lector*, who leads the opening prayer and proclaims the sacred Scriptures

*Gospel players*, who en flesh the roles in the scriptural drama

- Jesus
- John the Baptist (nonspeaking role)
- Voice from Heaven
- Evil One (the Tempter)

### Costume Trunk Items

A lectionary or Bible, robes, headdresses, a liquor bottle, and food items



## Presentation of the Drama

(See resource intro-A, “Leader’s Tasks.”)

### Script for the Background Reading

**Catechist.** During the season of Lent, we are called to re-examine our goals and values; to recommit to our baptismal vows; to turn away from evil; and to embrace the Light, who is Christ, and enter the Reign of God. The Gospel this Sunday tells the story of Jesus’ forty days and forty nights in the desolation of the Judean wasteland, where he defeats the temptation of the Evil One. This sojourn is placed at the very beginning of the public ministry of Jesus in the Gospel and at the beginning of our liturgical readings for Lent. In the desert Christ forms and clarifies a plan to reconcile humanity with his Father. Within the story is an invitation to each of us to examine the deserts of our life. Great wisdom is woven into this memory of Jesus passed down through the ages. It is a pathway to freedom. The story of Jesus’ temptation in the desert is a blueprint for resisting evil by holding fast to the truth. And Jesus has promised that the truth will set us free.

### Script for the Gospel Reading

*[The lector leads everyone in prayer while holding up a lectionary or Bible for all to see.]*

**Lector.** Come, Holy Spirit. Teach us wisdom so that we may always have the ability to discern what is right and what is wrong. Enlighten our hearts and minds and give us a hunger for your will for our lives.

*[The lector proclaims the Gospel reading for the current cycle from the lectionary or Bible. Upon finishing, the lector leads the group in response to the Gospel, again holding up the lectionary or Bible for all to see.]*

**Lector.** The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Group.** Thanks be to God.

### Script for the Gospel Drama

*[The catechist announces to the group the title of the Gospel scene to be dramatized.]*

**Catechist.** “Who Are You, Anyway?”

*[The catechist describes the Gospel scene to the group.]*

**Catechist.** As we begin this drama, let’s imagine Jesus telling his disciples what happened the day the Evil One approached him. Only two people could tell that story, Jesus and the Tempter. This is Jesus’ version. The Apostles passed it from one community to another, and over time their memories formed the sacred writings we know as the Gospels. We, disciples of Christ at the genesis of the third millennium, share it with you. You will tell your children. And so the cycle of redemption passes from generation to generation. The Gospel is proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

*[Jesus and John the Baptist walk silently into the scene.]*

The story begins with Jesus approaching his cousin John for the baptism of repentance in the Jordan River. Immediately the Holy Spirit descends on the Christ and a voice from heaven proclaims:

**Voice from Heaven.** This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

**Catechist.** Filled with the Spirit, Jesus travels into the Jordanian desert, to be alone with God, to prepare himself for his mission as the Messiah.

In the dusty desert wasteland where the sun blisters the bare rocks, Jesus faces the test of temptation. In the Garden of Eden, God had said:

**Voice from Heaven.** “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit.” . . . Yes, it is good.

**Catechist.** The dry barrenness of the Jordanian wilderness seems to stand in direct contrast with the beauty of the Garden of Eden. But to the Jews, the desert is an ancient image of both danger and hope. It is in the desert wasteland of our lives that God “hears our cry,” offers salvation, and leads us into the land of promise. It was in the desert that Israel was called out of the slavery of Egypt into freedom, given the Covenant of the Law, and healed of idolatry.

Jesus is praying quietly to himself when the Evil One approaches. The Evil One, the Tempter, sits down beside Jesus and begins a conversation.

**Evil One (the Tempter).** Hey! How you doing? Hot out here, isn’t it. Oh, I would say about 110 in the shade. *[Brandishing a liquor bottle]* Want some tequila? a little lime juice and firewater over ice? Hmm?

**Jesus.** No, thank you.

**Evil One.** Hey! How’d you like a taco?

**Jesus.** No, thank you.

**Evil One.** *[Holding out a variety of food items]* Some matzo, maybe? lox, bagels . . . a little cream cheese?

**Jesus.** No, thank you.

**Evil One.** What? Are you weird?! You don't eat?! You don't drink?! What? My food . . . my booze . . . aren't good enough for you? Listen! I happen to know that you're starving. As a matter of fact, you could eat a horse right now, couldn't you? Forty days, forty nights. What?! Are you playing Noah out here in this God-forsaken hellhole of a desert?

**Catechist.** In the Gospel reading for today, God uses the desert experience as an allegory, or symbol, to talk to us about how life and Mother Earth have changed since the Creator made us.

**Voice from Heaven.** When I created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a green, lush, beautiful place, where man and woman ate freely from the tree of life. Now look, children; the Evil One has deforested and destroyed my garden, turned it into yellowed, desolate, crumbling limestone, a blistering wilderness. And you have used your free will to let that happen. So I have sent my Son to lead you home to my love, to heal everything and make it new. The day of the Lord is at hand.

**Catechist.** Jesus, the Tree of Life, stands in the arid desert. He is Living Water for the thirsty. He is Christ, the Bread of Life, offering the Eucharist to the hungry. Truth, courage, and loyalty to God's will for freedom clash against the temptations of the Evil One, eternally offering only compromise and bondage.

As our scene continues, Jesus is in prayer. The Evil One tries to distract him. Jesus resists his tricks by focusing on his own relationship with his Father, God. Putting our mind and heart on the love of God is always the way to resist temptation.

**Evil One.** Look, let me be straight with you. You seem like the kind of man who appreciates honesty. I just wanna know who I'm dealing with. So here goes. There's talk around here that you're him. Are you? Are you the Promised One? The Son of God? If you're the Anointed One, . . . command these little round pieces of limestone to become loaves of bread. I'm running out of bagels for this lox. . . . Great lox; . . . I could use a little bread. Are you the kind of guy who'd feed the hungry? You know, food is a little scarce this time of year.

**Jesus.** Father, when my ancestors were hungry, you sent them bread from heaven. When they were thirsty, water rushed from the rocks, and you gave them possession of a Land of Promise. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

*[The Evil One gestures to the catechist his disgust with this man in the desert and then focuses back on Jesus.]*

**Evil One.** All this poetry is nice, Holy One, but you've gotta be hungry. Spiritual food is deep, really deep, but you could probably use a little bite of something to chew on, eh? Whatta ya say? I know I'm starving! Help me! How about turning this stone into a little piece of bread. Hmm? Staff of life. Can't live without it.

**Jesus.** It's written that a person doesn't live by bread alone.

**Evil One.** Good. You know the Scriptures. Book of Deuteronomy, right? Well, isn't it the truth. Said a long time ago, in another desert, by another prophet. Moses, right? The Boss Man humbled all of you by letting you hunger in the Sinai. Yeah! Yeah! I've heard all about it.

**Jesus.** Blessed be the name of the Lord.

**Evil One.** Ah! The Great I Am caused manna to fall from the sky. For forty years, there it was. Manna for breakfast. Bread of life at first light. So, what do you think? Did it do any good? Forget basic bread. How about a sub, hunk of hoagie, little cracker and cheese?

**Jesus.** One does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God.

**Evil One.** Remember the visions of Isaiah? Bread raining down from heaven for you? It's gonna be some kind of golden age when the Messiah comes. You could have a little bread. Multiply a few loaves if you wanted. Rain down bread. People will follow you. You'll be so popular . . .

**Jesus.** For those in bondage, I pray. Come out from the darkness. You shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike you, for God—who has pity—will lead you to rushing springs of living water. Children of my Father, drink fully of the river of life. The path of satisfaction is dependence on God, not anything of this earth.

**Evil One.** You're an interesting kind of guy. I really like your seamless cloak. A robe like that is pretty rare—and expensive. Whoever gave it to you must really like you. You're that Jesus, aren't you? I've heard a lot about you. You're a pretty impressive dude. Not very talkative though.

**Jesus.** Wisdom teaches that in the presence of strangers, you should do nothing that is to be kept secret, for you never know what they will divulge. Wisdom suggests that you not reveal your thoughts to anyone, in order to protect happiness. It's not wise to cast your pearls before swine.

**Evil One.** Okay! So you like being mysterious—I can handle that! I like a good mystery, a good challenge. *[Pause]* You know, we haven't actually met, but I've been following your career all along. I like keeping records on people like you. There's been a lot of talk about you since the day you were born—actually since you were conceived. Son of the carpenter . . . Son of Virgin Mary . . . Son of God? Do you know who I am, Jesus? I'm the one who can make something out of you. If you follow me, you won't be riding on the back of a jackass. You won't be hanging out with a bunch of worthless fishermen. You'll own a fleet of chariots and dine with Caesar himself. And let us not forget the wealth, the power and pleasures that come with privilege.

**Jesus.** There is a proverb that teaches that wisdom is better than jewels. Prudence, knowledge, and discretion are true wealth. The Law of Moses says to remember the Lord your God, for it is God who gives you real power.

**Evil One.** Maybe so. But my world can be very entertaining, very pleasurable for a long, long time. The future is yours for the taking. *[The Evil One gestures to Jesus to look into the future.]* All the kingdoms of the world and more I will give to you, if you worship me.



**Jesus.** The word of God commands that you shall worship the Lord your God, and only God shall you serve.

**Evil One.** Why, you self-righteous Galilean! Just who do you think you are? Who do you think you're talking to? You know, you're a lot like your mother. Yeah! You sound just like her.

*[The Evil One mysteriously waves his hands. Jesus and he instantly find themselves looking down into the city of Jerusalem from the highest roof of the Temple.]*

Do you know where you are, Carpenter? In one heartbeat I transported you to the highest rooftop of the Temple of Jerusalem. Not bad, eh! From the deepest desert to the center of the city in a second . . .

**Catechist.** The Evil One challenges Jesus to a battle of wits designed to tempt him to commit the sin of pride. The devil tries to get Jesus to proclaim his own power. But Jesus dispels the seduction of evil by relying on the power of God.

**Evil One.** Look, you can see the golden hills of Hebron from up here. And look! You can see the courtyard of the Temple. Go on, Promised One, look down.

I know! Why don't you do one of your God tricks? I did a trick for you. . . . Show me your stuff. Go on, Son of God. Throw yourself down, and let's see what happens. You know where you are, don't you?

**Jesus.** Have mercy, O Lord, on Jerusalem, the city of your sanctuary. Zion has seen your majesty, and your Temple, your glory. The time is at hand. Father, fulfill the prophecies spoken in your name. Wisdom has built her house. . . . Like the morning star among the clouds, like the full moon at the festal season; like the sun shining on the Temple of the Most High, the majesty of your Temple, O Lord, gives praise to your name.

**Evil One.** What are you, a poet? Don't get carried away on me now. Get real! This place is great. Look around, Christ. Think of the power wielded in this place. We're standing on the parapet of the Temple of David, built by Solomon, rebuilt after the Captivity in Babylon and restored by Herod the Great. Have you met his son Antipas? Hmm? You will.

**Jesus.** And the Lord said: "My shepherd shall do my will. The foundations of my Temple will be laid. Jerusalem will be rebuilt." Father, I come to do your will.

**Evil One.** Why shouldn't you stand here? This is the place where every morning a priest blows the trumpet that proclaims the first light of the dawn, to announce the hour of sacrifice. So why shouldn't you leap! Right into the Temple court. Aren't you the *Perfect Sacrifice of your Abba Daddy*? Go on, amaze everybody. Didn't prophet Malachi say that you would suddenly come to the Temple? Well a flying entrance from the parapet would be sudden. It would prove that you're the One, the Chosen Son. They'd all believe in you then. Why shouldn't you do it? A little publicity never hurt anybody. Are you afraid, Son of God?

**Jesus.** Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. . . . Humility goes before honor. Blessed are you, Father, in the Temple of your holy glory. Blessed is your throne, where cherubim praise and exalt your name. Father, be glorified in your Son.

**Evil One.** It's getting really *thick* around here! Speaking of my pals, the cherubim: This book you keep quoting also says that your famous Father will send his angels to protect you. On their hands they will hold you up, so you won't hurt your tender feet on these stones. Now that would be very impressive. I would really like to see that. I used to hang out with those guys. Come on! Give it a try and call on your angel friends. This will be great. A hit! A MAJOR HIT!

**Jesus.** You shall not tempt the Lord, your God.

**Catechist.** Many times the English language keeps us from grasping the rich meaning behind a passage in the Scriptures. The word *temptation* is a good example. In modern English, it means "the act of seducing, persuading, enticing, or luring into evil." The Greek word from which it was translated in the Bible is *peirazein*, which includes the idea of testing for preparation. The purpose of this testing is to build strength, not to trick or lead into sin. The test is in front of us at all times. The question is, Will we walk through the fire and become strong, tempered like the purest gold, or will we weaken and be destroyed?

**Jesus.** Begone, Satan!

**Evil One.** Okay, if you say so. . . . But I'll be back.

**Catechist.** The struggle against evil is a continual challenge we face every day of our lives. But the victory of Jesus is our birthright as children of God, as followers of Christ. The life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus have long been studied by his followers as a blueprint for understanding the challenges of the Christian life. The Gospel celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent is a window through which we can see the personal trials and temptations that faced Jesus.

Jesus teaches us to use the gift of our free will, given to us as creatures made in the image of God, to refuse to enter into a battle of wills with evil. Jesus shows us that relying on the truth of the revealed Word of God in the Scriptures and sacraments is our defense in the battle for justice.

When Jesus told the devil to begone, the Evil One gave up and left him. Jesus then returned to his home in Nazareth and entered the synagogue to pray for his mission. It has been twenty-five hundred years since the community of Isaiah wrote the inspired words of his prayer, and two thousand years since Jesus took the book of the prophet and read them there in the synagogue. The words still stir great power, love, and hope for humanity.

**Jesus.** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, to proclaim a year of Jubilee.

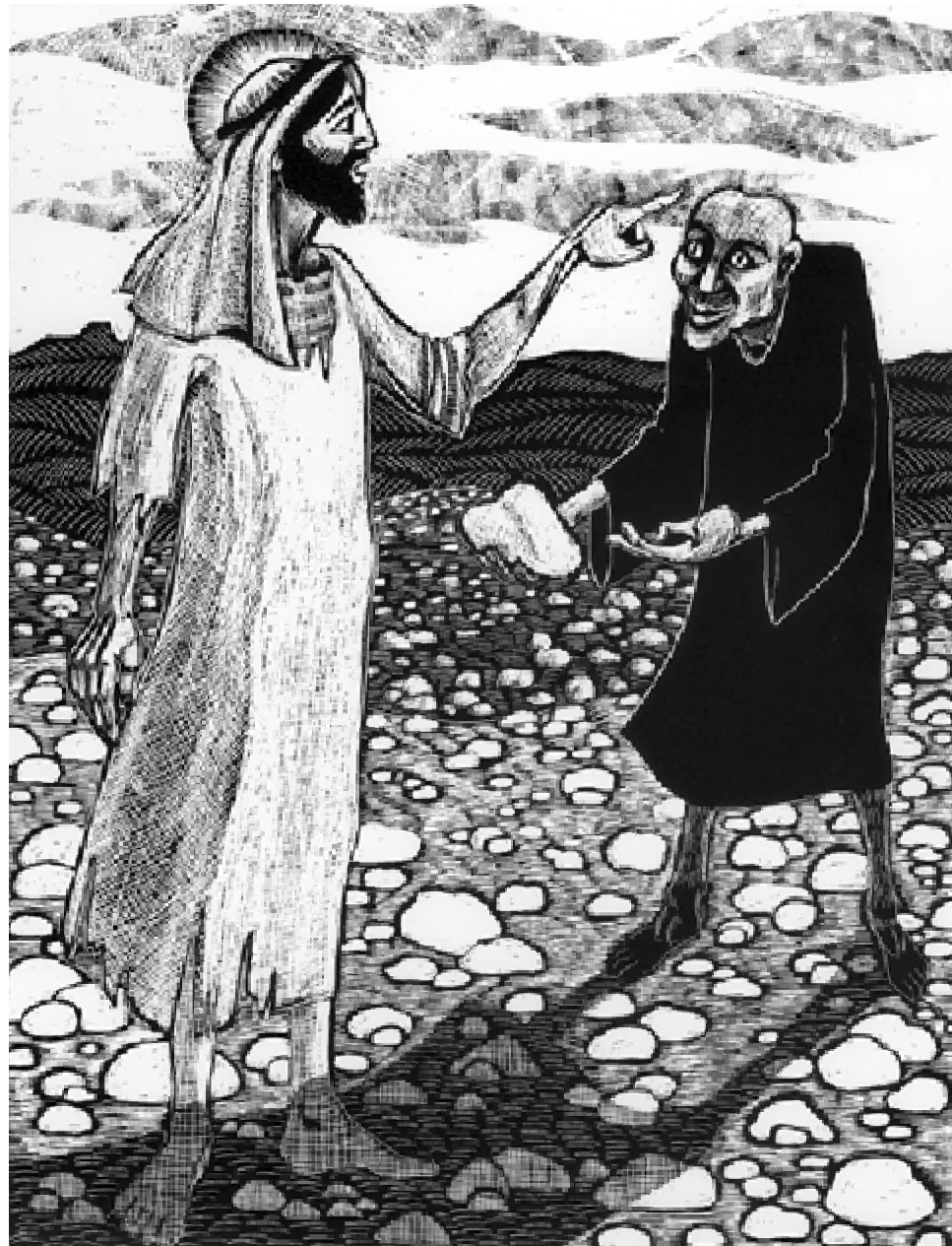
Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

## Follow-up After the Drama

(See resource intro-A, “Leader’s Tasks.”)

### Reflection Questions

- Has anyone ever tempted you to participate in something that you knew was wrong? If so, how did you handle the situation?
- How does evil try to seduce us to do wrong?
- How did Jesus overcome the temptation to sin? What can we learn from that?
- What does this Gospel tell us about who Jesus is? about his character and nature?



## Improv

(See resource intro-A, “Leader’s Tasks.”)

## Closure

(See resource intro-A, “Leader’s Tasks.”)