

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



In today's readings:

Creation, temptation and sin. Genesis 2:7-9,3:1-7
The greatness of grace. Romans 5:12-19
Forty days and nights in the desert. Matthew 4:1-11

Next week:

The Transfiguration
Genesis 12:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:8-10;
Matthew 17:1-9

In a nutshell

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Today's Gospel depicts a Jesus who struggled. He was tempted just as we are tempted. To be tempted is part of being human. To overcome temptation is part of being a follower of Christ. The call to faith is to have complete trust in God's Word.



At the beach one day

At the beach one day I watched a group of teenage boys playing a casual game of touch footy. They were all strong, agile, muscular, bronzed Aussies. All that is, except one. He was the ugly duckling of the gang—overweight, slow on his feet, sunburnt rather than sun tanned. He was clearly paying for his differences. I watched, sick to the stomach, as the boys on both teams teased and jeered him, making him the butt of every joke. Whenever he got the ball it was as if the game would temporarily stop as a player pummelled him into the sand, tackling him with a ferocity reserved for him alone. This was bullying with a capital B.

To make it worse, the boy played the role of perfect victim. He made no effort to stand up for himself. He was pretending he didn't mind the bullying and practically made himself into a human punching bag through his passivity. My thoughts flashed forward—ten, twenty years into the future—and saw a young man damaged by poor self-esteem,

carrying a truckload of painful memories. Dear God! I prayed.

At that moment, as if an answer to prayer, two more boys joined the game. They were obviously part of the gang but I could see them taking offence to what was going on. 'Hey, get orf him!' 'Just play the ball, mate.' They had a knack of calling off the bullying while encouraging the boy to be more proactive in his defense. I was mentally applauding them for their goodness and courage.

I left the scene pondering the complexities of human nature. How is it that some people have the courage to withstand the temptations of peer pressure while others so readily succumb? (Rebecca)

'It is impossible to see one's face in troubled water.' (Thomas Merton)

Out there alone

A man of deep spirituality recalls a moment from his troubled youth.

It was the height of summer and I was stranded at a crossroad in the middle of a desert, waiting in vain for a ride. Not only was the heat unbearable but I was becoming terribly hungry. The hitchhiking holiday I had chosen was supposed to be fun, an adventure. 'Travel lightly and depend on your wits' had been my motto all along. Now the motto seemed a touch too fragile. I berated myself for not planning my trip better.

As day turned into night I turned my attention to the bushy scrub at the side of road, as I searched for a place to sleep. I lay on my back looking up at the stars. Despite my

hunger and fatigue I was almost entranced by the night sky. It was beautiful. The celestial activity was unending. I began to think of the people who were close to me. I began to think about many things in my life. What was I doing out here, anyway? Miles and miles from home and seeking what? My life, which had seemed so full, suddenly seemed so empty.

Pondering these questions amidst such solitude and beauty brought a new kind of clarity. My time alone was turning from an experience of distress to one of peace and discovery.

Lenten suggestion: Take time out to review your life's direction. Pray for the wisdom to know what is right and for the courage to do it.

A childhood memory

When I was preparing for my First Communion, one of my friends, who considered himself worldly and wise at the grand age of seven, said that we could wish for anything at our First Communion and it would come true. I was a quiet kid who never spoke up much. Yet to my own surprise I found myself contradicting what had been said. 'Jesus isn't magic. Jesus is God.'

(Robert)



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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