

# OVERCOMING THE TEMPTATION OF INDIFFERENCE

*First Sunday of Lent – 26 February 2023*



## Overcoming the temptation of indifference

*Temptation in the Wilderness by Briton Rivière*

On this First Sunday of Lent, we listen to the Gospel of Matthew about how Jesus overcame the three temptations.

Today we take time to identify the temptations in our own lives, and how we draw on the strength of God, to overcome them. One such temptation is indifference.

Let us note some examples.

### 1. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Archbishop of Tokyo, Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, SVD, in his recent homily at the Opening of the Asian Continental Assembly last week, stressed that *“indifference could kill people in need of assistance.”*

As he reflected on his experience of working for three months in a refugee camp in 1995, he recalled how he had witnessed a horrendous two hour attack on the camp by armed forces, during which he saw thirty refugees massacred.

When he revisited the camp, one of the refugee leaders requested:

*“Father, when you go back to Japan, tell people we are still here. We are forgotten.”*

In his homily, the Archbishop stressed that

*“We should not forget indifference could produce despair, but solidarity could produce hope to live.”*

### 2. GHANA

In his homily, the Archbishop also recalled an example from southern Ghana, where he had been a village parish priest 1987-1994.

He had asked them about their obvious happiness amid life’s difficulties.

They explained to him that they have ‘Ghana Magic’, which is the

*“conviction that in difficulties no one is forgotten by others.*

*Someone will come to help. Someone will always care about you. That is the Magic.”*

### 3. REMEMBERING TO PRAY FOR UKRAINE

Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us of the need to pray for Ukraine. Last Tuesday he received a gift of a cross from Ukraine. We described it in our parish media as follows:

*“A symbol of the suffering of the people of Ukraine. The cross was presented to Pope Francis by Fr Grynevych, Secretary-General of Caritas Spes-Ukraine.*

*It is made “from the shards of glass from the windows of houses destroyed by Russian bombing”. Source: Vatican News <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-02/pope-cross-glass-missiles-symbolising-pain-ukrainian-people.html> We keep Ukraine in our prayer this Lent.”*

### 4. OUTCOMES OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL IN AUSTRALIA

It is important that we overcome any indifference to change in the Church in Australia. The first 8 Decrees of the Plenary Council are:

[Decree 1 Reconciliation - Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts](#)

[Decree 2 Choosing Repentance - Seeking Healing](#)

[Decree 3 Called by Christ - Sent Forth as Mission Disciples](#)

[Decree 4 Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men](#)

[Decree 5 Communion in Grace - Sacrament to the World](#)

[Decree 6 Formation and Leadership for Mission and Ministry](#)

[Decree 7 At the Service of Communion Participation and Mission – Governance](#)

[Decree 8 Integral Ecology and Conversion for the Sake of Our Common Home](#)

By Pentecost this year, the General Introduction and the Introductions to the first eight Decrees of the Fifth Plenary Council are to be empowered by *“a pastoral study guide for use by dioceses, eparchies, parishes, schools, and agencies”*.

The ‘Commitment’ that concludes each of the Introductions is to be *“shaped into ‘Questions for Reflection/Areas for Exploration’ as to how such aspirations may be engaged in specific and local contexts.”*

The terms of reference for the Implementation Phase are at this link.

<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Terms-of-Reference-Implementation-Plan.pdf>

At our Parish Pastoral Council in February, we discussed the Brisbane Archdiocesan Summit in May to discuss implementation of the Plenary.

At our Parish Finance Council this Monday evening, we will discuss parish financial subsidy for parish representatives to attend the Summit.

The Archdiocese will make available more details soon.

## 5. ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Decree Two from the Plenary Council is at this link.

<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FINAL-Decree-2-Choosing-Repentance-Seeking-Healing.pdf>

We recall below, sections 3-7 of Choosing Repentance Seeking Healing.

“3. In responding to the call to become a more Christ-centred Church, the members of the Plenary Council reflected on the special care that Christ showed to children, welcoming them and blessing them (Matthew 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–15). We are keenly aware of the cases in which the Church has failed to follow Christ’s example of such care and we acknowledge the need for repentance.

4. As a Plenary Council, we recommit the Catholic Church in Australia to responding transparently, with justice and compassion, to those who have been abused, whether they approach the Church directly or through the government’s National Redress Scheme or through civil litigation. Dioceses and other Church organisations should provide sensitive and appropriate processes for the pastoral care of those who have been abused.

5. For the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and for the prevention of abuse, we recommit the Catholic Church in Australia to implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. We endorse the expectation in those standards that each diocese, eparchy and Catholic entity regularly reviews their procedures for keeping children, young people, and vulnerable adults safe, in the light of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, as well as the requirements of canon and civil law.

6. We affirm the practice of an annual Day of Prayer (currently called “Safeguarding Sunday”) on which Church communities throughout Australia pray for God’s healing for those who have suffered abuse and dedicate themselves to care for children and all those who are vulnerable, following the example of Christ.

7. In this introduction, the Plenary Council:

- a. says sorry to the victims and survivors of abuse, their families and communities;
- b. recommits the Church to respond with justice and compassion to those who have suffered from the trauma of abuse, including where appropriate, ongoing pastoral and spiritual support and accompaniment;
- c. encourages the practice, where appropriate, of local memorials in various forms, as a tangible recognition of the harm done through abuse and the need for special care for children;
- d. reaffirms the commitment of the Church in Australia to the work of implementing and improving safeguarding standards and practices;
- e. calls on all Catholics to commit to ensuring that Church environments are safe and respectful;
- and f. requests the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons, with assistance from appropriate experts, to study, acknowledge and address systemic factors which have facilitated abuse within the Church.”

Following are local Archdiocesan details for STOPline.

“STOPline

If you think it’s wrong... report it.

STOPline is an independent service that receives information about suspected abuse, harm and other serious misconduct by workers (including priests, religious, employees, educators, practitioners, support workers and volunteers).

If you think it’s wrong... report it.

STOPline Phone: 1300 304 550 Email: [AOB@stoline.com.au](mailto:AOB@stoline.com.au) Online Report:

[www.bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com](http://www.bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com)

Information can be provided anonymously.”

As we encounter Jesus this Lent,  
may we overcome the temptation of indifference.  
Through the gift of the Holy Spirit,  
may we work together in solidarity to protect the vulnerable.

### GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 4:1-11

The three temptations have been called a summary of all the temptations that we face.  
Let us pause and quietly identify the temptations we currently face in life.

**[Pause]**

Whereas Israel failed time and time again, Jesus overcame the temptations and gave us hope.  
Jesus did not misuse his status. Jesus did not abuse by his power.

### THE 1ST TEMPTATION

*“If you are the Son of God, command these stones to turn into bread”*

Jesus responded to the first temptation by quoting:

***“One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”***

We can be tempted to think we live by our own bread alone  
(our own daily concerns and lifestyle)  
and be indifferent to God’s Word and the needs of others.  
It is the temptation of being imprisoned by our selfishness.

### THE 2ND TEMPTATION: ON THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE

*“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down ...”*

Jesus responded to the second temptation by saying:

***“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”***

We can be tempted to put God to the test  
by being indifferent to God and to our neighbour.  
This Lent we ask ourselves in what ways we put God to the test.  
And we ask God to forgive us. We focus on how our trust in God can grow.

### THE 3RD TEMPTATION: ON A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN

*“All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me”*

Jesus responded in two ways to the third temptation by saying:

**“Away with you Satan”** and by quoting:  
**“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him”**

We serve God. We do not serve the temptation and inclination to

- injustice, • intolerance, • indifference, • inequality,
- manipulation of power and hatred. • idolatry,
- worshipping possessions, • worshipping status
- worshipping people • worshipping ourselves.

#### **FORTY DAYS OF LENT**

We take the time during this week to overcome our indifference.

We commit

- to reflect, • to dialogue with God, • to repent and cleanse,
- to pray, • to renew, • to put God first once again.

Inspired by today’s Gospel, let us

1. live by the Word of God,
2. not test God.
3. worship God alone.

We take the time this Lent

- to cleanse and renew our intentions,
- and to deepen our service of God and our neighbour.

As we encounter Jesus this Lent,

may we overcome the temptation of indifference.

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit,

may we work together in solidarity to protect the vulnerable.

Let us love God deeply. Let us pray.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022623.cfm>

