

**The Still Point**  
**A Time of Meditation and Reflection**  
**The First Sunday of Lent**

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;  
**Peace on each one who comes in joy.**  
Peace on each one who offers prayers;  
**Peace on each one who offers song.**  
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,  
**Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.**

**Opening Prayer**

Lord, help us to see:  
to see what is eternally good and true,  
and having seen, to go on searching  
until we come to the joys of heaven.  
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**The Gospel**

*Luke 4:1-13*

After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,  
to protect you,'

and

'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**Poem:** "The Devils"

*by Raphael Rudnik*

The devils felt goodness when they were angels,  
But did not understand what to do  
As the terrible annunciations rang  
Proclaiming that everything was love.

So gave back to the vault of heaven, desire –  
And becoming, then trying to be, power –

They fell, embracing fire with wings of fire.

**Meditation:**

The temptations in the wilderness are a hinge between Jesus' baptism and his public ministry. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus has received the message of love and acceptance from the One he calls Father. As he sets out on the road, will he place his trust in this loving acceptance, or rely on his own strength and gifts? Sometimes his overcoming of temptation is presented as a sign of personal power and fortitude. But a close reading shows that he relies on a strength that comes from beyond him, from the source of love itself, made known in scripture, in the giving of the law from which he quotes, and his experience of the divine in prayer.

The poem focuses on Jesus' adversaries, the devils who tempt him. These devils are not blatant expressions of pure evil; they are angels who don't know how to cope with the message

that everything is love, and so turn to desire and power. They are what they offer to Jesus – a rejection of all-encompassing love in favor of the embrace of fire.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

What kind of temptations have you encountered? When you look back on those times, what do you observe in yourself? How have you changed? Or not?

When you read “everything is love” how do you respond?

Spend some time with the last phrase of the poem, “embracing fire with wings of fire.”

### **Prayers**

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ’s holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

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*Poem choice and reflections by Elizabeth Randall*