

#46 March 23, 2023 Drawing Closer to saving us from the time of trial - deliver us from evil. Portions of two worthwhile homilies by Luke Ditewig and Jim Woodrum of Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) ending with my simple definition of it all. With blessings and affection, Deacon Kate Ann

This is the final conversation of the Lenten Initiative – Spending 12 minutes a Day with The Lord’s Prayer.

Deliver Us from Evil Luke Ditewig SSJE

Much of the snow here melted last week, changing our perspective. The grounds and gardens came back into view. As soon as the river thawed, rowers went back out in their sculls. We see what was hidden: water, plants, and paths along with trash and twigs. Lent invites revealing, attending to what has been hidden, and reordering our lives. It may include gathering the trash and raking up the twigs within our souls, what we can see is out of place.

It is more than lawns or riverbanks and more than simply tidying up. Wash yourself from evil. From denying goodness in each other. From denying goodness in ourselves and in the world. From all our little to large words and actions and inaction—including allowing others and systems to act on our behalf—all that degrades, oppresses, shames, and enslaves.

Particularly in Lent, we are called to realize, name, and turn from our sin. As we will sing: “Lenten gifts invite us, searching deep within, claiming our desires, naming all our sin.” Not in order to beat ourselves up. Not because God wants revenge. Rather, surrender by acknowledging our need and receive grace.

God wants to extend good life to all, not only stopping evil. “Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, [and] plead for the widow.” Blessed, we are to be a blessing, sharing life with others. From receiving, we live with gratitude. Psalm 50 says: “Whoever offers me the sacrifice of thanksgiving honors me” Not simply ritual or tidying up to look good but thankful hearts from having received mercy.

Lead Us Not into Temptation or Save us from the Time of Trial
By Br. Jim Woodrum, SSJE

Of all the petitions offered in the Lord's Prayer, the one that most provokes my curiosity is "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The early desert monastics (beginning in the fourth century) acknowledged the sobering reality of temptation in their lives. Yet for them, temptation was not something to be avoided, since the refining of our spiritual lives required an engagement with temptation. My study of that period of monasticism has helped me to appreciate that temptation reveals areas of my spiritual armor that need to be fortified in order for me to become more fully the person God created me to be.

Even Jesus, in his humanity, was tempted after his baptism by John in the Jordan River. You'll recall that he withdraws into the desert for forty days, where he faces a series of temptations. In each temptation delivered upon him by the devil, Jesus withstands by recalling scripture that he had learned and memorized growing up in his faith.

The crucial insight we can take from the desert monastics is seeing that temptation itself is not a sin. They deemed that only entertaining temptation in such a way as led to acting upon it was sinful.

Like the teachings our own Rule of Life acknowledges the reality of temptation in our life of faith: "For the hours of the day to be permeated by mindfulness of the divine life we must be engaged in constant struggle, depending on God's grace. Powerful forces are bent on separating us from God, our own souls, and one another through the din of noise and the whirl of preoccupation." For me, this preoccupation usually occurs when I'm not feeling my best. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert, he was in the midst of a forty-day fast from food and water.

In my own life, when I am facing temptation, I recall a slogan from the rooms of 12-step recovery: H.A.L.T., which is an acronym for "Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired." Whenever you feel tempted to do or say something that is not conducive to the life to which God has called you, you might find it helpful to notice if you

are feeling hungry, angry, lonely, or tired and then tend to some self-care. Seek nourishment, counsel for your anger, the company of a trusted friend, or take some time for respite. You might want to recall the words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel: "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Temptation is inevitable; and we have at our disposal many tools we can use to help us withstand it.

A Simple Definition for Us All - Deacon Kate Ann

From where I stand, a wise clergy friend, once said to me when I asked him to define sin, he simply said, "Sin is anything that distracts you or damages the relationship you have with God." And so, in the end of this conversation on "deliver us from evil and save us from the time of trial," it is so simple - what trials and temptations are we wrestling with?