

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

A role model is someone you look up to;
it's someone that lives their life in a way you want to imitate.
A role model sets an example for others to follow.

We all have people we look up to.
We all have role models here and there—
for some it's your father or mother,
for others it's a grandparent or teacher or friend,
and for some it's a sports star or a musician.

We've all got 'em and wish, to some extent, we could be more like 'em.

But as helpful and beneficial as role models can be,
they can't make you like them.

Every kid growing up used to want to be like Michael Jordan,
but Michael Jordan never made anyone just like himself.
He didn't transfer his basketball skills to a room full of kids—
as much as they may have hoped for.

Role models are wonderful examples that give us something to dream for,
to work towards,
and use as a standard for how far we've come.

And that being the case, role models come in the way of the Law.
They show us the various methods we can use to be more like them.
They hold us to a standard, a high standard,
and when we don't live up to them, we recognize that we aren't them.

And so it is that one of Satan's greatest temptations is to have you believe that this Jesus is
simply a role model, an example.

Today's Gospel reading can very easily be misunderstood.

Just think to yourself, if Jesus is *the example*,
then when Satan comes with his temptations, all you need to do is quote some passages
of Deuteronomy back at him!

If Jesus is *the example*,
then the key to resisting Satan is to simply know more Scripture than him.

And if Jesus is *the example*,
then He can't do anything for you.

Sure—maybe He can encourage you or teach you or motivate you or whip you into shape;
 but unless *you* follow His model, His methods, His *example*—
 you're dead.

If Jesus is simply the role model, the example, then He's simply a Law Jesus.
 And the standard He sets is pretty darn high!

If your Jesus is simply a role model,
 a wonderful example of the righteous life;
 if your Jesus is the "What Would Jesus Do?" sort of Jesus,
 you don't have the right one.

At least not the Jesus from the Gospels.

No, the Jesus from the Gospels isn't simply an example to follow.
 He doesn't merely model the good life, or show us the methods for proper living.
 If Jesus were simply an example, a model, He'd be no good for us at all!
 None of us can follow His lead, His perfection.

But fortunately, our Gospels tell us of a Jesus who's much more than an example.
 They give us a Jesus who delivers Himself for us.

Just look at these three temptations that Satan places before the Christ.

The first comes while Jesus is hungry—He's gone 40 days and 40 nights without food (Mt 4:2).
 And so, Satan tempts Him in His weakness, with His hunger:
"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread" (Mt 4:3)

This temptation speaks to immediate gratification.
 It's a temptation for Jesus to use His power to alleviate His hunger, His suffering.
 Satan tempts Jesus away from suffering, away from weakness and pain, and death.
 But Christ always goes the way of the Cross.
 Jesus refutes Satan's temptation by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3,
**"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the
 mouth of God"** (Mt 4:4)
 Jesus would rather suffer the death of His body than give up the Word of God.

The second temptation again tries to have Christ in the way of power, the miraculous, and glory:
"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" (4:5)—
 and this time, Satan even quotes Scripture to prove his argument:
"He will command His angels concerning you," and,
"On their hands they'll bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone" (Ps
 91:11-12).

But Christ again walks the way of humility—
 He hides His powers and His glory and His being the Son of God.
 And in so doing, He lets himself be ridiculed—
 He opens Himself to accusations, "Well you must not be the Son of God!"

Then comes the third temptation,
 where Satan quits beating around the bush and tempts Jesus with a bribe—
 “**all the kingdoms of the world and their glory**,” Satan says,
 “**will I give to you if you fall down and worship me**” (Mt 4:8-9).

But again, our Lord walks the way of humility—
 He’d rather forfeit all the kingdoms and the glory of this earth,
 than forfeit His worship of the heavenly Father.

In each of these temptations, Jesus resists Satan with the Word of God,
 “**Again, it is written...**”.

And in each of these temptations, we fall.
 If Jesus is our example here, we’ll quickly become frustrated with ourselves—
 “I can’t live up to that Jesus.”

But again, that’s not what our Lord is doing in this reading, today.

He’s not offering you an example to follow, a hero in the faith, or a role model.

In each of these temptations, Jesus is standing in your place for you.
 He’s resisting the Devil *for you*.
 He’s conquering Satan and all of his evil temptations *for you*—
 because you can’t do it yourself.

Jesus suffers these temptations in the stead and the place of the people of Israel.
 It was Israel who was led through the parted Baptismal waters of the Red Sea,
 and into the wilderness for 40 years—being tempted.
 It was Israel that cried out in their hunger for bread and meat and water.
 It was Israel that put God to the test at the waters of Meribah.
 It was Israel, who when they entered the promised land decided they’d rather have the
 glory of the kingdoms around them, then worship the one true God.

And here we have Jesus undoing what Israel has always done.
 Here we have Jesus standing up and resisting the temptations of Satan,
 where Israel always failed.
 Here we have Jesus, trusting the Word of God and His promises,
 even when it causes Him to suffer, rather than seeking glory.

This Jesus always comes in the way of the cross.
 He always suffers Himself to be tempted and tried and questioned.
 And yet He always resists temptation—
 not just as an example for us to follow, but that too,
 but He resists temptation *for us* because He knows we can’t.

He goes to the cross *for us*,
He was led into the wilderness, *for us*,
He was placed on the pinnacle of the temple, *for us*,
and He was led to a very high mountain, *for us*.

And in all this,
He destroyed the Tempter and all his temptations *for us*.

You are now free.

You are forgiven.

The Lord is much more for you than just an example—

He actually steps into your temptations and delivers you from them;

He gives you Himself:

His body and blood, soul and divinity,
all *for you*.

He goes the way of the Cross, *for you*.

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