

These temptations are symbolic on many levels, and they're **so** human! In fact, just like the temptations faced by the first humans, I think they're temptations or attempts to be more than we are -- **not** to be human; to be like God – the same temptations the first humans faced in the Book of Genesis.

They are temptations    to worry about my own comfort first;  
                                  to draw attention to myself because of my gifts and talents,  
                                  and to dazzle others with the extraordinary;  
                                  to achieve my own goals, rather than what God wants.

They describe the human temptation    to fill ourselves on our own (to make bread);  
                                  to control and dominate (rule the kingdoms); and  
                                  to yearn for the miraculous rather than work hard  
                                  (jump from the Temple).

On a deeper level our temptations seek  
                                  to avoid feeling needy and dependent (by trying to be self-sufficient and independent);  
                                  to avoid feeling powerless (because I prefer to be in control); and  
                                  to deny my humanity (by wanting to be God).

The passage from Deuteronomy is an invitation to live another way: to choose a way of life that puts **God first**. The people are told to come before the Lord with an offering of their “first fruits” as a thanksgiving offering – the first fruits are the first portion and the best part of their harvest.

Jesus resisted the temptations not to accept the fullness of his humanity; he could have clung to his divinity. But he resisted that temptation to take care of his own needs first, or to seize power, or to dazzle with miracles rather than accepting his human life which included suffering and death.

Jesus' shows us how to give our first fruits to God from whatever we have:  
                                  so God has the first claim on our time (and not what we can squeeze in);  
                                  God receives the first share of our resources (and not what's left over);  
                                  God deserves the first share of my talents (not me).

To allow God first place leads to salvation and everlasting life. Lent is the time to examine and reorganize our lives again so that God is in first place. When we do that, temptations emerge, sometimes with a new force.

Temptations are attractions, enticements, desires, that in some way we know are not positive or healthy or proper or moral. For example, we don't call exercise a temptation, but we do call over-eating a temptation. Temptations have an energy, a lure that pulls us toward what we think will be good or pleasurable. We think, or try to convince ourselves, that following this temptation will be OK; it will be a good thing (at least for the moment). And in some ways it is comforting to know that Jesus in the fullness of his humanity faced temptations, too.

So when we face temptation, what can we do? I'd suggest three things:

-- **recognize them for what they are** -- attractions and desires that are self-centered; temptations are not focused on God, but on our own pleasure;  
 -- **immediately respond no** – don't dilly-dilly, wonder "what if," or fantasize about the possibilities and how good it would be if we follow the temptation; when the temptation comes, just say no!  
 -- **don't test the limits** – that's like standing at the edge of a cliff; testing sounds like "I'll go to the bar but I won't drink;" or "we'll fool around the couch but not do anything else;" we used to call these "near occasions of sin" and they place us right in the middle of temptation.

Remember that you are *alive with the power of the Spirit*, the same Spirit you received at your baptism. It's the same Spirit Jesus received at his baptism that enabled him to resist his temptations in the desert. We heard on Ash Wednesday, "Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel." Believe in God's Word. Trust in God's way that will lead you safely through temptation and into new life.