

Satan's first effort to tempt Jesus was pre-empted with the words, **"If you are the Son of God..."** Such a question implies that Satan was testing Jesus' identity! If you know what it's like for someone to test your identity, then you'll know that it's easy to get upset and angry on account of how what's so essential to your sense of worth is being overlooked, denied, ridiculed,
or at least taken for granted. For example, if you're a Cook by profession, and a very good one at that, and someone calls you clumsy, it may not upset you as much as when someone says, "The food you cook tastes yucky" because this targets your very own identity.

And yet, when Satan was testing Jesus' identity by questioning His Divinity, there was no wounded pride in

Jesus, or no ego because He does not say, "You idiot! You're just an angel – a fallen one – but still an angel, and you don't know that I'm the Son of God!"

On the contrary, none of His answers give any hint of admission regarding His Divinity, much less any expression of it. He **"did not count equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself"** (Phil 2:6).

Why did Jesus want to empty Himself?

The answer is simple, but profound. The simple answer to the question is this: you cannot fill something which is already full.

The profound answer is that Jesus wanted to be filled not with Himself, but His Father.

Let's look at Jesus' response to the

first temptation to satisfy His hunger.

He said: **"Man does not live on bread alone."**

This response expresses His dependency on His Father for it resonates with what He told His disciples when they offered Him some food to eat: **"...my food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work"** (Jn 4:34).

In other words, just as food fortifies the body, doing the Father's will fortifies Jesus' very being.

The Greek word which St John writes for "food" here is "broma" which was often used to connote ceremonial food.

Could Jesus be giving us an insight here about how He is 'fed' by His Father?

What's more, how does the Father 'feed' the Son?

We say in the Nicene Creed that the Son is eternally "begotten" of the Father and that he is "consubstantial with the Father."

Could another way of expressing this belief be that the Son *feeds* on the Father?

That He is (to use a human metaphor), *'nourished'* by Him? Jesus had said, **"...whatever the Father does, the Son does too"** (Jn 5:19). If the Son said,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"

(Jn 6:53), in light of John 5:19, does this mean that Jesus is patterning the self-donation of His Body and Blood upon how He is 'nourished' by the self-donation of His Father?

The Father is not comprised of flesh and blood, but it would seem that the Father does, nonetheless,

feed His Son with His very self according to this human metaphor in light Jesus' words,

"As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (Jn 6:57).

Pondering this leads us to consider what sentiments were in Jesus' heart when He prayed,

"...my soul thirsts for you ... My soul is filled as with a banquet" (Ps 63:1,5).

The second temptation implies that Jesus will win followers by exciting them with spectacular marvels. It gives me comfort in knowing that Jesus did not adopt this strategy because rather than die *to* sin, Jesus would have died *from* sin, His own sin, such that the integrity of love in the Blessed Trinity would have become broken.

It's one thing for humanity to fall from grace, but if God Himself fell from the

grace of His own inner-life through the temptation of the devil, what hope would there be for us? Further comfort comes from considering that being saved by spectacles would be a cheap way of loving us, especially compared to the Sacrifice by which Jesus would become the new Passover Victim to redeem us.

In essence, the third temptation (to have power to rule the world under the condition that Jesus worships Satan) is very sinister. There is truth in what Satan said. He can indeed give Jesus power to rule the world because ever since Adam and Eve fell from grace, the world is under Satan's power.

But what would it mean to worship Satan?

It would mean that Jesus' effort to bring about a new Exodus would fail because He could not worship Satan

without being his accomplice in sin, in fact, it would mean more than the mere tolerance of sin, but the glorification of it because just as worshipping God makes us like God, worshipping the devil makes us like Satan.

Contemplating this temptation should make us feel great repugnance to the inordinate use of power.

Jesus Himself was obviously aware of how disordered He would become if He gave in to worshipping Satan because He said,

"You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone."

That the angels came to the aid of Jesus after the devil left Him demonstrates what a great extent Jesus was tested to the point of exhaustion.

The words from Psalm 63:3 comes to mind here: **"Your love is better**

than life itself."

Jesus was prepared to empty Himself so totally of Himself in response to His temptations because He valued the love of His Father more than His own life. He was so intent on being filled with His Father alone.

As it was for Jesus, so for us: I can imagine that the angels, particularly our Guardian Angels, come to our aid after we are tempted to console us with assurances of God the Father's love as He would take delight that despite the alluring attraction of temptation, we decided to be faithful to His love for us.