

This Lent, look inside

Spiritual directors and social scientists sometimes summarize all human behavior under the three wants: wanting approval, wanting control and wanting to be safe. Most of our efforts on the ego level are seeking to attain one of these three wants.

Interestingly, as I studied the three temptations of Christ in Matthew's Gospel, they are about these three wants. Satan stands Jesus on the parapet of the temple and says: "If you are the Son of God throw yourself down. The angels will take care of you."

Isn't that a temptation to want approval? "You'll wow the crowds!" Why not perform a spectacular miracle and win over the crowds?

Yet, as we all know, human approval is a slippery slope. The crowd that will cheer Jesus on Palm Sunday will jeer him on Good Friday. Approval is temporary at best, illusory at worst. How free would we all be if we didn't care what others thought.

The temptation to turn stones into bread, isn't that about wanting safety? Yet bread does not confer permanent safety. It may extend life, but it can't guarantee eternal life.

Finally, the temptation to have Jesus worship Satan in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world, isn't that about control? You'll have all the power in the world! Yet Jesus rejected the temptation. He realized power was within him, not in Satan.