

An Identity on Which We Can Rely

In Luke's gospel, the story of Jesus' temptation comes immediately after his baptism and a lengthy listing of his ancestors. Both help confirm the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. Now Jesus is led into the wilderness, where his identity is put to the test by the devil. The specific temptations are in some ways secondary to the question that introduces two of them. Twice the devil asks, "If you are the Son of God . . ." (Luke 4:3, 9), perhaps implying that the devil believes he knows better than Jesus what it means to be God's Son. But Jesus, "full of the Holy Spirit," is able to stand firm in his identity and deny the devil's attempts to redefine who he is.

In our baptisms, we too are given the identity of God's child, and we are given the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our baptisms do not protect us from temptation, even as Jesus himself endured temptation. However, in our baptisms we are given an identity that can help us endure the temptations and the challenges that our lives are bound to include. Baptism gives us the confidence to trust that our identity is defined by our relationship to God, and not by anything else. In this confidence, we can accept our failures and shortcomings and live boldly in a manner that seeks to emulate Christ's own life.

