

In the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 16 it says

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test...”

It goes on to say “keep the commandments; do what is right and good that it may go well with you...”

The word used here is *nacah* which mean to “put to the test, to try, to tempt.”

The Israelites were accused of testing God

when they found themselves in the desert with no water.

They grumble against God and quarrel with Moses.

Doubt and fear overtook the people and they concluded God had abandoned them.

They questioned God’s reliability because he was not meeting their expectations.

Jesus refers to such testing when he is tempted by Satan in the desert.

If you recall, the devil took Jesus to the holy city,

and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him,

“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

‘He will command his angels concerning you’

and ‘with their hands they will support you,

lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus responds: “It is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’”

Do not force God’s hand.

Do not purposely put yourself in peril and then say to God

“if you really love me you will protect me and save from this danger.”

We accept God’s word on faith. Faith is believing and trusting without seeing.

The Pharisees in today’s gospel do not have faith with regards to Jesus.

They were motivated by ill will. What they wanted was for Jesus to fail.

They expected Jesus to fail.

They wanted to do everything they could to discredit him, to cause people to doubt him.

And when Jesus failed, he would lose the popular support of the people.

We are commanded not to test God.

In our arrogance and pride, equating ourselves with God,

we expect the same treatment from God and say “do not test me, O Lord.”

A truth that becomes evident to the first disciples, and eventually becomes evident to us, is that our faith in God will be tested. Our faith will be put to the test.

In the midst of hardship, persecution, and suffering our faith is challenged.

Doubts arise. We can come to the same conclusions as the Israelites:

God doesn’t care about me. God has abandoned me.

Let’s us follow the encouragement given to us from the letter of James.

When our faith is being tested, let us pray for wisdom.

Admit the lack of human understanding: “Lord, I don’t understand what is happening or why it is happening to me.”

What we fail to see is that history is clear when it comes to those who embrace and promote what is good and what is true and what is just: they will suffer attack from evil.

There will be temptation to blame God and even curse God as a result.

Today’s prayer: “O Lord, help me to see You through what is divine instead of through human eyes. Your ways are beyond my knowing. Grant me the grace to live in faith and not in fear and anger. Amen!”