

About 10 years ago, I bought a truck on credit. Maybe 3 to 6 months after that, I got a letter that data was stolen from the bank, and that my information may have been stolen.

Sure enough, there were a bunch of strange charges on my credit card statement - and when I called on each one ... the companies had already figured out that something was wrong, and refunded my money.

That was my first experience with IDENTITY THEFT.

Five years ago, I was working in a dormitory at a university, and filed my taxes as an out-of-state employee in Ohio. Around June, I got a letter that said that the database had been broken into and my tax information had been stolen.

Ohio's government paid for a protection service to monitor all activity on my credit.

It seems that everyone these days either has first hand experience or knows somebody who has had to deal with IDENTITY THEFT.

In the Gospel reading for today, we hear from Luke's gospel about the temptation of Jesus in the desert.

The devil approaches him three times ...

*If you are the Son of God,  
command this stone to become bread.*

*[All power and glory] will be yours, if you worship me.*

*If you are the Son of God,  
throw yourself down from here*

In each of these three episodes, the devil goes after Jesus' identity as Son of God.

The Son of God did not come into the world to flaunt His Divine Power. Rather, Jesus came into the world to become like us in all things but sin.

But that doesn't stop the devil from trying to tempt Him, nonetheless.

In the same way, we are all tempted in ways that deprives us of our ultimate identity. And a lot of the time, the temptation twists our identity in a way that may - in the long run - damage our identity.

It may come in many ways:

*If you were a real man, you wouldn't take that ...*

*If you want to get a good grade on the test, you may as well cheat ...*

*If you want to get ahead in business, you're gonna have to ...*

*If you really love me, then lets go ...*

We've all been tempted. And we win some and we lose some.

St. Paul gives us the solution to dealing with this type of SPIRITUAL IDENTITY THEFT that comes about through temptation and sin ...

*No one who believes in him will be put to shame.*

and

*For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

So, even if we don't have a snappy answer to the temptations that come and go on a daily basis, we do know that by staying close to Jesus Christ ... and abiding in FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE ... we can persevere in our calling.

And when we do fall, we have the means to return to full communion with Christ through the Sacraments.

Never doubt your baptismal identity in Christ. Even if you might hear:

*If you do that, you'll never be able to go back ...*

Because that's just not true.

We have an infinitely loving God in the Trinity, who desires a relationship with us and calls us to live in FAITH HOPE and LOVE as children of the Father, redeemed in Christ, and full of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit.