

## **First Sunday of Lent B/2012**

The readings of this first Sunday of Lent talk about the power of overcoming evil. They invite us to realize that life is like a fight that sometimes we lose. However, in spite of our failure and underperformance, God always gives us a second chance in order to rescue us and to save us.

The first reading of the book of Genesis recalls the events that happened in the aftermath of the flood that destroyed the earth in the time of Noah. It describes especially the covenant that God made with Noah and his sons and the living creatures that were saved in the ark. It shows how God commits himself with an oath, in spite of human sin, to preserve the earth and all the living creatures.

What is behind this text is first of all the idea that God is merciful. The second idea is related to the covenant between God and Noah. In fact, a covenant is a relationship between two parties and which puts an obligation on each one of them. Because God is able to enter into covenant with human beings, it means that he is disposed to treat them as partners, with clemency and bounty, even if they fail to fulfill their obligations toward him. That is the reason why he committed that the waters will never again become a flood to destroy the mortal beings.

That commitment of God to show mercy and forgiveness was fulfilled once and for all when he sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to be our savior. In order to fulfill that mission, Jesus had to triumph over temptations and show his faithfulness to the Father. That explains the narrative we have in today's Gospel as Jesus is driven out in the desert and tempted by Satan. But, in this time of temptation, Jesus is not alone; he is helped by the angels of God who were serving him. Then, victorious and triumphant, he could start teaching the good news of heaven and call people to repentance.

What do we learn from this Gospel? The first thing we learn is about the essence of temptation. As human life has taught us, it is impossible in human life to live without temptations; they are almost inevitable. However, it does not mean that because they exist, we cannot triumph over them. With God's help, we can overcome all the power of evil.

In fact, the temptations come our way as an opportunity from which we can prove to ourselves how strong we are. In that perspective, temptations prepare us to be better warriors of God. It is like a soldier who has to suffer through difficult training and harsh discipline in order to be good at his duty. When training and discipline are well assimilated, they make him well equipped and ready for the time of combat. Whatever might be the rage or the strength of the enemy, he is sure that, being well prepared, he can overpower the enemy.

The second thing we learn is about God's help in time of trial. In fact, the Gospel says that, as Jesus found himself in the desert, the angels of God ministered to him. This episode teaches that, as difficult as the temptation might be, we are never left alone. God is always with us and helping us so that we might not be crushed by the enemy. This is why whatever might be the temptation, we have the assurance that we will triumph against it.

The third thing we learn is the importance of repentance. The call to repentance is an important part of the message of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. But, it is also at the heart of our Christian life. Without repentance and conversion of heart, it is impossible to be a good disciple of Jesus. The call to repentance is the message of this time of Lent that we have started today.

In fact, with Lent, the Church reminds that life is a fight, but in this fight, we are not alone. Jesus is with us; he fights with us, at our side; he supports us and wants us to live. We might have been wounded in the fight of life; we might have failed in our commitments, but even so God wants us to survive from the burden of our failures and to live. That is why he calls us to come back to him through fasting, praying and almsgiving.

In that sense, Lent is for us a time of a second chance; it is an opportunity that God gives us to start again from where we have failed and stumbled. We have to take advantage of this wonderful time of Lent and stand up from the dust of our misery, from where we fell down. In spite of our sins, we have to trust God's mercy and bounty and build a bright future with him. We have to understand that failure is part of the human journey, but the journey is not over; it is still before us. Therefore, we have to keep going and count on God's grace which we can receive in the sacrament of confession.

The fact that Jesus calls us to repentance shows that, although he knows us very well, he is not ashamed of our vulnerability and sinfulness. The only thing he wants is that we might be saved. That is the reason why he died for us on the cross so that we might be led to the Father, as St Peter says in the second reading.

This time of Lent is a time of trusting again in his mercy and forgiveness with the hope for our salvation. If Jesus went to preach and to bring a message of salvation to the spirits in prison, who had once refused to believe when Noah was building the ark, in which a few persons were saved, how much more can he do for us men of this time?

Let us enter into the ark that brings us to the safe shore by finding refuge in Jesus' word. Let us wash our iniquities and sins in the water of the baptism by accepting to change our lives and our behaviors. Let us reconcile with God and with our fellows through the sacrament of confession so that we share in the resurrection of Jesus. May God lead you to a holy Lent where you strive to bring peace in your families, in your relationship with God, with yourself and with people around you! May God bless you all!

**Genesis 9: 8-15; 1 Peter 3: 18-22; Mark 1: 12-15**



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