

First Sunday of Lent A/2020

The readings of this first Sunday of Lent talk about the reality of temptations and sin. They show that we are continually exposed to the solicitations of the devil. They invite us to learn how to resist them like Jesus by relying on the Scriptures.

The first reading describes the sin of Adam and Eve. First off all, it recalls their creation out of the clay and their empowerment as living creatures with the spirit of God. It also describes the garden where God put them surrounded by many different kinds of trees, including the tree of life and that of knowledge of good and evil.

Then, the text describes how the serpent deceived them to disobey God's rules and to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Finally, the text highlights the consequence that followed their disobedience and the discovery of their nakedness.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the creator of human beings and the guarantor of their happiness. Another idea is that anytime we, as human beings, listen to the voice of the devil instead of that of God who created us, we run the risk of jeopardizing our life and our happiness. The last idea is related to the truth that our willingness to be independent from God alienates us and separates us from him.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as it talks about the temptations of Jesus in the desert. The Gospel starts with the mention of the Holy Spirit as the one who led Jesus in the desert to be tempted. Then, it gives the context of Jesus' temptation by referring to his fasting for forty days and forty nights.

After that, the Gospel gives the details related to the temptations. It shows that on the first temptation, the devil challenged Jesus to transform the stones into bread if he were really the Son of God. It also gives Jesus' reaction where he declares that one does not live on bread alone, but on the word of God.

By talking about the second temptation, the Gospel shows that the devil made Jesus stand on the parapet of the temple of Jerusalem with the injunction that he throws himself down because the angels will take care of him lest he hurts himself. Then, it gives Jesus' reaction through which he declares that Satan should not put God to test.

After that, the Gospel shows that on the third temptation, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain from where he showed him all the kingdoms of the world with the promise of giving them to him if he worships him. Finally, it shows how, like in the two other temptations, Jesus rebuked Satan by declaring that God alone has to be worshiped and served. In the very end, the Gospel shows that the Devil left Jesus while the angels came and ministered to him.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today, I want to talk about the spiritual warfare and the grace of victory. Let me start this way. We live at an important moment in the history of humanity. Life has never been so beautiful and made so easy by the development of so many inventions and technologies. What was impossible to attain and to hope for fifty years ago is made possible today by the entrepreneurial spirit of our time.

However, it has also become easy for people to become prisoners and slaves of modern inventions and technologies. For instance, newspapers, radios, televisions, internets, display new products and commercials in such a way that it is impossible not

to succumb to their attraction. One of the consequences is that today people are more in debt and in continual dependence than they have been before. Many do not want to stay behind while the world evolves. Many want to match the spirit of our time and to live at the pace of its development. This is a continual temptation before us.

But, the irony is that what enslaves us materially speaking as a temptation can also bear on our spirituality. For instance, when we want to have more and more because of the appeal of commercials, it means that we lose the capacity to resisting solicitations and attractions. In the same way, we lose our ability to find a right and balanced judgment when we are solicited. In the end, we become prisoners of material things we manipulate.

For instance, online gambling ruins the life of many people and families. The pornography destroys the chance of young men and women to normally get married because the addiction gives them the illusion of being happy in dwelling in it. In the same way, marriages are destroyed by the reality of addiction to pornography. The spirit of consumerism makes people obsessed with possessing, eating, drinking or smoking. Even the cell phone initially conceived of, as a device of communication, has become an instrument of isolation.

In such atmosphere, Lent comes to us as a wakeup call for our deliverance and redemption. We need to take concrete actions to stop this erosion, like fasting from media, Internet and commercials. In fact, Lent is an opportunity God gives us to renew our fight against evil. It is a spiritual surge against evil through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and penance. In this fight, we are not alone; Jesus is with us. He has preceded us. He tells us that he was also tempted but he triumphed. Not by relying on his own strength did he win victory, but rather by counting on the word of his Father.

We too can triumph in our own temptations with the word of God. Jesus reminds us that it is an illusion to think that we can find complete satisfaction of our needs outside God and in material things. He teaches us that the human food satisfies only the body, but the word of God nourishes the soul. He invites us to adore God alone and not our possessions and material things. That is why living in this world just for what is sensational, prestigious and gratifying of our senses is deadly.

This period of Lent is a time of listening to what the Holy Spirit tells us in the Scriptures. Let us make the word of God the guideline of our life and of everything we do in this life. May we be convinced that we cannot overcome our trials and temptations without the help of the word of God! Let us ask God for the grace to cross the trials of life with Jesus. Let us ask God to protect us from temptations and to deliver us from every evil. Let us ask Jesus to make us strong, faithful and patient in time of our trials. May God bless you all!

Genesis 2: 7-9; 3: 1-7; Romans 5: 12-19; Matthew 4: 1-11



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