

First Sunday of Lent C/2022

The readings of this first Sunday of Lent talk about the importance of the convictions of faith and its profession. They invite us to entrust our lives to God and his word in order to triumph over the temptations.

The first reading recalls the speech of Moses to the people of Israel in which he invites them to be grateful to God by bringing him their offerings. It gives also the reasons why they should do so by referring to their time of slavery in Egypt and to the benevolence of God who set them free. Finally, it gives the modality through which those offerings have to be set before God.

What is behind this text is the idea that, without God's blessing upon us, our life would not be what it is today. Another idea is the truth that it is God who sustains us in life and allows us to survive hardships and difficulties of life. The last idea is a reminder of the debt we all owe to God for the blessings he bestows upon us in this life.

This text allows us to understand the point of today's Gospel as Jesus fights the temptations from the devil. First of all, the Gospel states that it was after Jesus' baptism at the Jordan that he was led by the Spirit in the desert where he was tempted by the devil.

Then, the Gospel evokes the circumstances preceding the temptations by referring to Jesus' fast at the end of which he was hungry. After that, it shows that for three times the devil tempted him about food, glory and security. It also shows that three times Jesus triumphed over the devil by using the strength of the word of God.

Finally, the Gospel says that when the devil has exhausted all the means of temptations, he departed from him for a time.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the necessity of choosing God's will over our own satisfaction. What do I mean by that? When we look at the way Jesus reacted to Devil's temptations, it is clear that he made a choice of obeying his Father by doing his will rather than to listen to his body.

First of all, let me say that the experience of hunger is very humiliating. No one can imagine what a hungry stomach is capable of doing in order to survive than the one who has experienced hunger. Think a little bit about what some did in the great depression in order to survive. Think of the stories told about Europeans who, in the Second World War, ate dogs, cats or rats, in order to survive.

No one really hungry would like to submit his family or himself to pain when there is a possibility of finding food. My own experience with people in Africa has taught me that some people accept easily corruption because they want to satisfy their needs and those of their families. And yet, it is in such a circumstance of hunger, after forty days without food, that Jesus stood firm in his convictions, obeyed his Father and did not give in to the solicitation of the devil.

The same is true about the pursuit of honor, glory and power. Who among us would not like to receive praise, honor and glory? How many people get upset just because they have not been recognized in a celebration for which they gave a lot for its organization? What would not people do in order to have power, honor and glory? And yet, it is in

such a circumstance that Jesus He preferred to obey the Father rather than to satisfy his own ambition and desires.

We can say the same thing about our physical and material security. Who among us, being in insecurity, would not like to be protected and to be assured about his integrity? And, yet in the desert where he was in a precarious condition, Jesus refused to give in by accepting to throw himself down so that the angels may take care of him.

How did Jesus triumph over such temptations? Where did he find resources to resist the devil in such a critical environment? Well, Jesus found resources in the power of the word of God. That is an indication to us that in time of our own temptations, if we cling to the word of God, we can find a powerful instrument of our victory.

This is true in many ways and spiritual experience has taught us so. When people neglect the listening to God through the regular reading of his word in the Bible, they become weak and prey to the solicitations of the devil. Positively, it means that anytime we have temptation, we can find a help in the word of God.

That is why we have to remember that the word of God is powerful, performant and effective. It is a powerful tool of our salvation. It defines our identity as Christians and disciples of Jesus. It provides us with convictions in difficult times and gives us strength in order to triumph over our enemy, the devil. As God says in the prophet Isaiah, “the word that goes from my mouth shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it” Isaiah 55:11).

As we enter the Lenten season, let us remember how our lives are crossed by many temptations from inside and outside. We need above all to confront and conquer temptations as Jesus did, using the means of the word of God. Jesus serves as a model for conquering temptations through prayer, penance, and the effective use of the “word of God.

We also need to grow in holiness during Lent by prayer, reconciliation and works of charity. We become resistant and even immune to temptations as we grow healthier in soul by following Lenten observances, fasting, prayer and almsgivings.

In Lent we need to come closer to Jesus, to examine our lifestyle, and to hear his word anew, with freshness of heart. Let us set a goal in this first week of Lent that can draw us closer to God. Let us ask Jesus to convert our hearts and our lives through the listening of his word. God bless you all!

Deuteronomy 26: 4-10; Romans 10: 8-13; Luke 4: 1-13



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