

First Sunday of Lent C2025

Each year, the first Sunday of Lent opens up with the readings of the temptations of our Lord in the desert. There is a symbolic meaning to the temptations. As Israel was in the desert forty years, so our Lord was tempted 40 days in the desert. He spent forty days without eating or drinking. However, unlike the Israelites who, pushed by hunger and thirst, rebelled against God, our Lord remained faithful to the Father until the end.

What tip did help our Lord to overcome the devil? Well it was the word of God. About the word of God, Saint Paul says that "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*". By listening to the word of our Lord proclaimed by the Church, by putting into practice and by letting it transform our lives, we come to faith and are saved.

As you listen to this homily, the word is near you. As you hold the bible in your hands or put it at your bedside, or in whatever place in your house, the word is near you. As you talk about our Lord in your family, to friends or to other people, the word is in your mouth. The word is in your heart as you work hard to transform your life according to what you hear from the teaching of our Lord.

The word of God is a powerful tool of our salvation. It defines our identity; it provides us with convictions of faith and gives us strength to triumph over our enemy, the devil. It is with the word of God that our Lord triumphed in his temptation and affirmed his allegiance to the Father.

The temptations of our Lord are a summary of tests and trials he went through in his life, but at the same time, they symbolize the temptations we face as Christians on a daily basis. They bring to our awareness the fact that our Lord was tempted all his life long in his humanity, but in spite of all that he remained faithful to his Father. Such a victory was possible only because he was faithful to the word of his Father.

Now let us examine in details the temptations and the way our Lord triumphed thanks to the word of God. The first temptation is about food. Because he was hungry, the devil said, if you are the son of God, why do not you transform these stones into bread?

Brethren, I can tell you 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 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 and 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. Some people in my country accept easily corruption because they want to satisfy their needs and those of their families. And yet, it was in such a circumstance of hunger, after forty days without food, that our Lord stood firm in his convictions, obeyed his Father and did not give up to the solicitation of the devil. Yes, "One does not live on bread alone".

This temptation is always before us. The temptation for the bread points to the unsatisfied appetite for food in all its forms. Sometimes it expresses itself under the desire to have our needs satisfied at any cost or the desire to always have more and more.

The second temptation is about power and glory. The devil said, if you worship me I can give you all the kingdoms of the world and its power and glory. This is a big one because we all want to be considered great even if we are nothing. This temptation points to the continual search for honor and the blindness that comes with 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? What would not people do in order to have power, honor and glory? And yet, it was in such a circumstance that our Lord refused to give in to the solicitations of the devil. He preferred to fulfill his duty rather than to satisfy his own ambition and desires: “You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve”.

The last temptation is about security. The devil said, if you are the son of God, why do not you throw yourself down from this high place and the angels will come to protect you?

This temptation points to the illusion of finding our material security outside God. 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, our Lord refused to give in by accepting to throw himself down so that the angels may take care of him.

Brethren, as we enter Lent, we are reminded that our lives are crossed by many temptations from inside and outside. We can triumph over them only if we are faithful to the word of God and invoke our Lord. The temptations from our society are such that we need a deep wisdom and guidance in order to overcome them.

Let us turn to our Lord in almsgiving, prayer, fasting and penance so that he sustains us. The time of Lent is an opportunity that God gives us to approach him in transforming our lives and paying our allegiance to our Lord.

In Lent we need to come closer to our Lord, to examine our lifestyle, and to hear his words with freshness of heart. The word of God is eternal, capable of helping us to attain this goal. Let us set a goal in this first week of Lent that can draw us closer to God. Let us ask our Lord Jesus to convert our hearts and our lives through the listening of his word. Amen.

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



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