

Lent I Sunday 2/26/2023

Normally temptations come from outside but we need to overcome through God's graces. Prayer, penance and acts of charity enable us to defeat our temptations.

In the book Genesis it describes the "Original Temptation": "*You will be like gods, knowing what is good and what is evil.*" This is the story of the first sin, symbolized by the eating of the forbidden fruit. It tells us that Adam and Eve were given the possibility of making a choice. The fundamental choice was to live for God, dependent upon and obedient to His will, or to say 'no' to God. Like Adam and Eve, we are all tempted to put ourselves in God's place. Consequently, we resent every limit on our freedom, and we don't want to be held responsible for the consequences of our choices. In Genesis, we witness how temptation to evil led Adam and Eve to an act of faithlessness and sin. In contrast, today's Gospel from St. Luke shows us how Jesus Christ conquered temptation by relying on faith in God's Word and authority.

The gospel also prescribes a dual action plan for Lent: 1) We should confront our temptations and conquer them as Jesus did, by fasting, prayer and the Word of God. 2) We should renew our lives by true repentance and live the 'good news' of God's love, mercy and forgiveness.

The three temptations - *turn stones into bread* (4:3); *jump off the Temple pinnacle* (4:6); *worship Satan* (4:9) - demonstrate three kinds of control: material, spiritual and civil. These, in turn, correspond to three human-divine bargains: 1) I will worship you if you make me rich; 2) I will worship you if you endow me with magical powers; and 3) I will worship you if you give me political power. We

get the temptation to satisfy personal needs by material possessions, the temptation to perform miraculous deeds by spiritual power and the temptation to seek political power and social influence. But Jesus dismisses the temptations using the Word of God. He quotes the Law from Scripture itself: *“One does not live by bread alone”* (Deuteronomy 8:3); *“Do not put the Lord your God to the test”* (6:16); *“Worship the Lord, your God”* (6:13).

Yes, my dear brothers and sisters, we are to confront and conquer temptations as Jesus did using the means he employed. Every one of us is tempted to seek sinful pleasures, easy wealth and a position of authority, power and glory, and to use any means, even unjust or sinful ones to gain these things. Jesus serves as a model for us in conquering temptations by strengthening himself through prayer, penance and the active use of the ‘Word of God’. Temptations make us more powerful warriors of God by strengthening our minds and hearts. By constantly struggling against temptations we become stronger. In his first letter, St. John assures us: *“Greater is the one who is in us, than the one who is in the world (1 John 4: 4).*

We may be strengthened by St. Paul 's words in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *"No testing has overtaken you, that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and [God] will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing [God] will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."*

Hence, during this Lent, let us confront our evil tendencies by prayer (especially by participating in the holy Mass), by penance and by meditative reading of the Bible. It is time to say yes to God and no Satan as Jesus did.