

## Homily of First Sunday of Lent Year A

The first reading tells us the story of the fall of Adam and Eve. Satan is never happy whenever and wherever God does something good. His target is to de-create and to destroy. That is why the Scripture teaches us, "Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith..." (1 Peter 5:8-9). It means that wherever and whenever good things are happening we must be watchful and alert because Satan has his own evil plans. People who do not know this or who do not take this knowledge seriously are always caught unprepared, and sometimes they fall into Satan's trap.

If Satan tempted Adam and Eve who lacked nothing, how much less you and I who face all kinds of difficulties of life, day in day out? If Satan could have the courage to tempt Jesus, who is God; who then are we to escape Satan's temptation? Satan's target is to make us obey him and disobey God. St. Ignatius calls Satan "the enemy of our human nature." Today we are presented with the way Adam and Eve handled their temptation, and the way Jesus handled his temptations. The two ways can help know Satan's tricks and be better prepared against our numerous temptations.

The sins of Adam and Eve are disobedience and greed. In the first reading, Eve replied to Satan, "it is only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'you shall not eat...'" Satan said to her, "No ... the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil. The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruits and ate it, and also gave to her husband ... and he ate it." Sometimes the temptation is not because we do not have, the temptation is because we want to have more than necessary. That is the greed. Greed then makes us to use sinful means to possess more than necessary.

The three times Jesus was tempted signifies that as long as we are alive, temptation is part and parcel of our battle. Temptation only stops when we die. No one can say that he or she is free from temptation. We will be tempted many times and in different ways.

In the Gospel Satan tempted Jesus after his time of prayer and fasting in the desert. At that time he was hungry. Satan said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." Sometimes it is through what we lack that Satan tempts us. At those times Satan plants in our head and mind ungodly means to finding solution our problem. In times of plenty (as in the case of Adam and Eve), or in times of need (as in the case of Jesus), we must be watchful and observant, and resist Satan.

The second temptation is that Satan asked Jesus to jump off from the parapet of the temple, and even quoted a portion of Psalm 91 to Jesus. Many times, people have landed themselves into trouble because they took certain wrong actions in order to impress others, or boost their false ego and false prestige or for fame and recognition. This is part of the problem with gangs. There are instances where people steal to satisfy their friends. There are instances where people abandon their wives, husbands, children to satisfy their friends. There are instances where people take drugs to enhance performance. Some end up destroying themselves. The second temptation also addresses the issue of craving for power which is a major destructive force in the world. Many of the crises and wars in families, communities and countries are due to inappropriate and use of power and might.

At the last temptation, Satan said to Jesus, "All these (kingdoms of the world and their magnificence) I shall give you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." There is no doubt that many people no longer serve and worship the true God. They serve and worship material things.

St Peter tells us to resist Satan firmly. That was what Jesus did. Jesus' reply to Satan came from the Scripture: "**One does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God**" (Deuteronomy 8:3). "**You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test**" (Deuteronomy 6:16). "**The Lord, your God, you shall worship and him alone shall you serve**" (Deuteronomy 6:13). These are words with authority! And when Jesus had driven Satan away, angels came ministered to him. Eve and Adam, on the other hand went into discussion, dialogue and romance with Satan, and they fell. They were driven out of the Garden of Eden.

Four major areas through which Satan tempts us are highlighted today to help during this lent and our life in general. They are the **desire for possession, desire for power, desire for fame, and worship of material things**. It is very revealing to me that it is with the power of the Word of God that Jesus drove Satan away. Christians must know the Word and use it. There is power in the Word. Hebrew 4:12 says, "For the Word of God is living and active..." We are told today to be watchful and not to go into romance with Satan but to drive him away by the power of the Word.

**Fr Martin Eke, MSP**