

Homily of First Sunday of Lent Year A

The first reading tells us the story of the fall of Adam and Eve. Satan tempted them and convinced them to disobey God. The sin of disobedience of Adam and Eve became known as the Original Sin. It is very important to understand that Satan is never happy whenever and wherever God does something good. Satan's target is always to destroy the good things God has done. His target is to make us obey him and disobey God. Therefore, whenever and wherever good things are happening we must be on alert because Satan has his own evil and destructive plans. Those who do not know this or who do not take this knowledge seriously are always caught unprepared, and many times they fall. Also, if Satan tempted Adam and Eve who lacked nothing, then, we who are faced with all kinds of daily difficulties of life cannot escape his temptations. Satan and his temptations are always lurking at our door and striving to get us. But as God advised Cain, we must try to be in control (Genesis 4:7).

The sin of greed contributed to the fall of Adam and Eve. Eve wanted to become what Satan had told her, "the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and 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, we are tempted not because we do not have enough, but because we crave to possess more than we need. Greed does make us use sinful means to acquire more than we need.

The Easter Proclamation, the *Exsultet*, calls the sin of Adam and Eve "Happy Fault" because "it earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer." St. Paul captures this message in the second reading, "For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ."

If Satan had the courage to tempt Jesus, who is God, then, we, mere mortal human beings, cannot escape his temptations. St. Ignatius calls Satan "the enemy of our human nature." Jesus had spent forty days and forty nights in the desert in prayer and fasting, in preparation for his mission. "The tempter," who always opposes God's plans, approached him and unleashed his temptations on him. First, "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 mind ungodly means to find solution to our problem. Whether 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 on alert in order to resist Satan's temptation.

The second temptation, Satan asked Jesus to jump down from 120 feet temple parapet. Satan cited Psalm 91:11 to deceive Jesus. That someone is brandishing the Bible or quoting profusely from it does not make the person a true follower of Christ. According to William Shakespeare, "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." Many times, people have landed themselves into trouble because they took wrong advice, or wrong actions in order to impress others, or boost their false ego, or win fame and recognition. There are instances where people commit sin for others' pleasure. There are instances where people abandon their family or a noble cause to please their friends. There are instances where people take all kinds of substances to enhance performance. Many people have ended up destroying themselves by such actions.

The last temptation, "The devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, 'All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.'" The last temptation addresses the sins of craving for worldly possessions and power which are major destructive forces in the world. The modern sin of idolatry is the worship of power and worldly possessions instead of service to God and worship of God.

Pope Francis in his interview with TV2000 in 2017 advises us how to resist Satan's temptation: "I am convinced that one must never converse with Satan. If you do that, you will be lost. He is more intelligent than us, and he will turn you upside down. He will make your head spin. He always pretends to be polite. That is how he enters your mind. But it ends badly if you do not realize what is happening in time. We should tell him, 'go away.'" That is Jesus' approach.

Another way to resist Satan's temptation is to arm oneself with the "Sword of the Spirit" which is the word of God, as Jesus did: As we read in the Gospel, Jesus pronounced to Satan these words of authority: "**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). And when Jesus had driven Satan away, angels came and ministered to him. May this become our experience too. Let us read the Bible, know it and use it.

If we imitate Jesus and rely on God's grace, we will be better armed against the lures of worldliness, and Satan's manipulations and machinations as we tread on our journey of faith. Pope Francis urges us in his 2020 Lenten message, "Keep your eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified, let yourself be saved over and over again."

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