Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Mt* 23:1-12): Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses (…). For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens [hard to carry] and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen (…)."

The temptation: appearance of good

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(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, the Master warns us against the hypocrisy and duplicity of the scribes and Pharisees. The latter —a religious contemporary group of Jesus Christ— are the target of this accusation. Jesus once labeled them as "whitewashed tombs". It is proper to be tempted and take a moral appearance: we are not directly invited to do wrong, that would be absurd.

The temptation pretends to show the best: give up finally the illusory and effectively employ our forces in a better world. It also presents the claim of true realism: the real is what is found (disregarding the faith). And, indeed, a vice of the "righteousness" consisted in eliminating the good by formal compliance (no heart) of precepts which were not so much of God as a twisted human casuistry. Hence, it is clear the core of every temptation: bring order to our world for ourselves, without God, relying solely on our own abilities.

—Jesus, I want to do Your will; I only care about Your opinion.