First Sunday of Lent (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 4:1-11): At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.” He said in reply, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you’ and ‘with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’”

Then 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.” At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is written: ‘The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil”

Fr. Byron CADMEN
(Santo Domingo, Ecuador)

Today, brothers and sisters, the Gospel takes us into the desert: “Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil” (Mt 4:1). It is not a spiritual stroll; it is the place where our dependencies are unmasked. The tempter begins with what is basic: “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread” (Mt 4:3). The proposal seems reasonable: solve the need right now. But Jesus responds with a freedom born of trust: “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4).

The second temptation is more subtle: to seek God as a spectacle, forcing Him to prove Himself. We too are tempted by a “faith of proofs”: if You answer me, I will believe; if not, I close myself off. Jesus does

not negotiate with the Father or manipulate what is sacred.

And when the third temptation arrives (power, control, success…), the Lord cuts it off at the root: “Get away, Satan!” (Mt 4:10), and He fixes the center of life: “The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.” This phrase is medicine for a culture that pushes us to live for applause, consumption, and self-sufficiency.

This Lent is not about enduring forty days, but about learning the freedom of Jesus. Fast so that your heart no longer obeys what is immediate. Pray in order to hear the Word that sustains you. And if you find yourself restless, remember Saint Augustine: “Our heart is restless until it rests in You.” As Pope Leo XIV has said: “God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail!”

The Gospel ends with a promise: “Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him” (Mt 4:11). Let us walk without fear: the desert is not the last word; it is the path toward a purer worship that makes us free.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Jesus conquered the adversary by quotations from the law, not by actual strength. He conquered that we too might likewise conquer.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot.” (Francis)

- “Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfils Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he ‘binds the strong man’ to take back his plunder (Mk 3:27) Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 539)

Other comments

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil”

Fr. Antoni BALLESTER i Díaz
(Camarasa, Lleida, Spain)

Today we celebrate the first Sunday of Lent. This ‘strong’ liturgical time is a spiritual path leading us to participate in the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. Saint John Paul II said: “Each year, the Lenten Season is set before us as a good opportunity for the intensification of prayer and penance, opening hearts to the docile welcoming of the divine will. During Lent, a spiritual journey is outlined for us that prepares us to relive the Great Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ. This is done primarily by listening to the Word of God more devoutly and by practicing mortification more generously, thanks to which it is possible to render greater assistance to those in need.”

Lent and today's Gospel teach us that life is a path leading us to Heaven. But to deserve this, we must first overcome our temptations. “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil” (Mt 4:1). By allowing Himself to be tempted, Jesus wanted to show us how we can fight and overcome our temptations: with our trust in God and in prayer, through grace and fortitude.

Temptations may be described as the ‘enemies of the soul.’ In fact, they can be summarized and determined by three aspects. In the first place, ‘the world’: "command that these stones become loaves of bread” (Mt 4:3). It implies living to possess material things only.

Secondly, ‘the devil’: “if you will prostrate yourself” (Mt 4:9). It conveys the greed for power.

And, last but not least, ‘the flesh’: “throw yourself down” (Mt 4:6), which means placing our confidence only in our body. Saint Thomas Aquinas explains it better when saying: “For the causes of temptations are the causes of desires" —namely, ‘lust of the flesh, hope of glory, eagerness for power’.”