

First Sunday of Lent (B)

Gospel text (Mk 1:12-15): At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

"The Spirit drove him out into the desert, and tempted by Satan"

Fr. Joan MARQUÉS i Suriñach
(Vilamarí, Girona, Spain)

Today, the Church celebrates the liturgy of the First Sunday of Lent. The Gospel presents Jesus preparing for His public life. He goes into the desert where He spends forty days in prayer and penance. There, He is tempted by Satan.

We must prepare ourselves for Easter. Satan is our great enemy. There are people who do not believe in him, saying he is a product of our imagination, or that he represents evil in the abstract, diluted among people and in the world. Not so!

The Holy Scriptures speak of him many times as a spiritual and concrete being. He is a fallen angel. Jesus defines him by saying: "He is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). Saint Peter compares him to a roaring lion: "Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith" (1 Pet 5:8). And Saint Paul VI teaches: "The Devil is the number one enemy, the preeminent tempter. So we know that this dark disturbing being exists and that he is still at work with his treacherous cunning."

How? By lying, deceiving. Where there is a lie or deceit, there is diabolic action. "The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist" (Baudelaire). And how does he lie? He presents evil actions as if they were good; he stimulates us to do bad deeds; and, finally, he suggests reasons to justify sins. After deceiving us, he fills us with restlessness and sadness. Have you not experienced this?

What should our attitude be toward temptation? Before encountering temptation: watch, pray, and avoid occasions of sin. During times of temptation: employ direct or indirect resistance—for example, prayer, good works, and other spiritual exercises. After being tempted: if you have overcome the temptation, give thanks to God. If not, then ask for forgiveness and gain experience to help resist future temptations. What

has been your attitude so far?

The Virgin Mary crushed the infernal serpent's head. May she give us the strength to overcome our daily temptations.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “For our life in this sojourning cannot be without temptation: because our advance is made through our temptation, nor does a man become known to himself unless tempted, nor can he be crowned except he shall have conquered, nor can he conquer except he shall have striven, nor can he strive except he shall have experienced an enemy, and temptations.” (Saint Augustine)
- “Where does temptation come from? How does it act within us? The Apostle tells us that it does not come from God but from our passions, from our inner weaknesses, from the wounds that original sin has left within us. The temptation has three main characteristics: it grows, spreads and justifies itself.” (Francis)
- “The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him (cf. Mk 1:12-13). At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 538)