First Sunday of Lent (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 4:1-13): Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me.” Jesus said to him in reply, “It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.’”

Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and:‘With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him in reply, “It also says, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’” When the devil had finished every temptation,i he departed from him for a time.

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

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Today, Jesus, “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Lk 4:1), goes into the desert, far from men, to experience in an immediate and tangible way, his absolute dependence on the Father. Jesus feels attacked by hunger and this moment of weakness is taken advantage of by the Evil One, who tempts him with the intention of destroying the very core of Jesus’ identity as Son of God: his substantial and unconditional adherence to the Father. With our eyes fixed on Christ, the conqueror of evil, Christians today feel encouraged to enter the path of Lent. We are driven to do so by the desire for authenticity: to be fully what we are, disciples

of Jesus and, with Him, children of God. This is why we want to deepen our profound attachment to Jesus Christ and to his program of life which is the Gospel: “One does not live by bread alone” (Lk 4:4).

Like Jesus in the desert, armed with the wisdom of Scripture, we feel called to proclaim in our consumerist world that man is designed on a divine scale and that he can only satisfy his hunger for happiness when he opens wide the doors of his life to Jesus Christ, Redeemer of man. This involves overcoming a multitude of temptations that seek to diminish our human-divine vocation. With the example and strength of Jesus tempted in the desert, we will unmask the many lies about man that are systematically told to us by social media and by the pagan environment in which we live.

Saint Benedict dedicates chapter 49 of his Rule to “The Observance of Lent” and exhorts us to “wash away in this holy season the negligences of other times (...), by devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial (...), to offer God something of our own will with the joy of the Holy Spirit (...) and look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “If in Him tempted we have been, in Him we overcome the devil. Do you observe that Christ was tempted, and do you not observe that He conquered? Acknowledge yourself in Him tempted, and in Him acknowledge yourself conquering.” (Saint Augustine)

- “When we are being tempted, the Word of Jesus can save us. Jesus is great because not only does he help us to get out of temptation, but he also gives us more faith.” (Francis)

- “Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him. This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: ‘For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning’ (Heb 4:15). By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 540)