

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, he departed from him for a time.

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

Fr. Josep LAPLANA OSB Monk of Montserrat
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Today, we see that Jesus, “Filled with the holy Spirit” (Lk 4:1), was led by the Spirit into the desert, far from men, to be able to immediately experience his total dependency upon the Father. In the end Jesus feels hungry and this moment of weakness is taken advantage of by the devil, who tries to tempt him with food to destroy the very nucleus of the identity of Jesus as the Son of God: his substantial and unconditional adhesion to the Father. And, today, our eyes cast upon Christ, victorious over evil, we feel stimulated to go deep into our preparation for Lent. We are pushed by a desire for authenticity: to fully be what we actually are: Jesus' disciples and, with him, sons of God. This is why we wish to get deeper and deeper in our profound adhesion to Jesus Christ and to his program of life, which is the Gospel: “One does not live by bread alone” (Lk 4:4).

As Jesus in the desert, armed with the wisdom of the Scriptures, we are called to proclaim to our consumer world that man has been designed on a divine scale and he can only satisfy his thirst of felicity when he opens wide the doors of his life to Jesus Christ, Redeemer of man. This implies to overcome many temptations that want to belittle our human-divine vocation. With the example and strength of Jesus, tempted in the desert by Satan, we will unmask the many lies about man that, systematically, are spread by the social media of the pagan environment where we live in.

Saint Benedict dedicates chapter 49 of his Rule “On the Observance of Lent” and exhorts us to “wash away during these holy days all the negligence of other times, (...), and give ourselves up to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and to abstinence (...). Thus everyone of his own will may offer God ‘with joy of the Holy Spirit’ something above the measure required of him (...). And with the joy of spiritual desire he may look forward to holy Easter.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“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)

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“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)

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“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, N° 540)