

HOMILY FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR A.



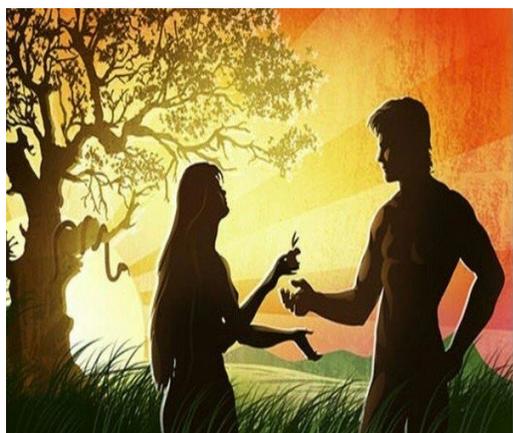
**GENESIS 2:7-9; 1-7, PSALM 51:3-6,
ROMANS 5:12-19, MATTHEW 4:1-11.**



JESUS IS THE OBEDIENT SON.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, last Wednesday we began the season of Lent, a time when we must all look within ourselves and be sincere in our pilgrimage of salvation. On this journey, we are constantly faced with inevitable temptations, but the Church reminds us that we are always free to choose whether to conquer them or to yield to them. In all of these, we need God's grace to remain faithful and successful on our journey. This season of Lent enables us to repent of our sins, renew our lives, and recommit ourselves to God's will, using the means Jesus used during His public life.

In today's liturgy of the word, we read an account of the temptation of Jesus, our model, who, after His baptism, was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). The First Reading also recalls the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The result of this fall, as St. Paul points out in the Second Reading, is the advent of sin and death into the world. So, the liturgy of the Word, therefore, helps us to keep in mind the reality of temptation in our lives. It also invites us to follow Jesus' example in responding to the temptations we face every day. The graceful season of Lent offers us the opportunity for repentance and conversion from the sins that we may have fallen into by unfortunately yielding to temptation.



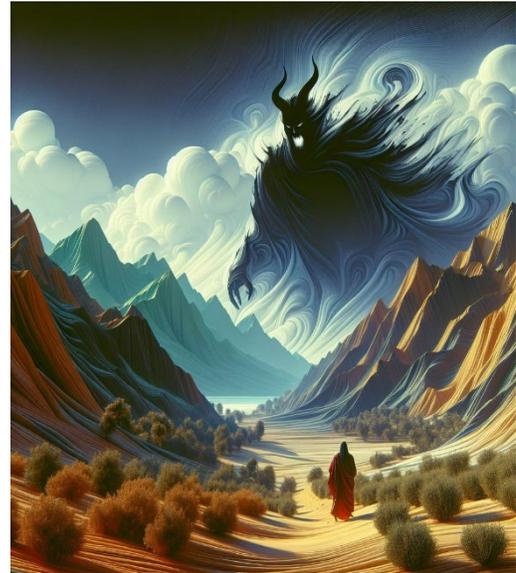
Beloved friends, at the heart of every temptation is the questioning of our dependence on God. Those who give in to temptation deny these realities of human existence. Like Adam, when we fall into temptation, it indicates that we no longer trust God; we think He is limiting us, so we want to be like God, knowing what is good and evil by ourselves alone; we want to be independent and completely free. Both the temptations of Adam and Eve and those of Jesus, and indeed our own temptations, belong to the threefold categorization of St. John: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). These three incline us to sin and, indeed, embrace all sins.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, as we can see, temptations are inevitable. Jesus was very emphatic when He told His disciples that temptations will necessarily come (Luke 17:1), and we, like Adam and Eve, are constantly disobeying the Word of God. This can make us feel that we have no hope for salvation. But there is a promise of salvation that

leaves room for great hope, as Paul tells us in the second reading: "As sin entered the world through one man's disobedience, so salvation enters the world through one man's obedience." That one man is Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus comes in the name of God. Like God in the garden of Eden, He comes to look for those who have hidden themselves from God: I have come to seek out and to save the lost." Jesus is the one who comes seeking us out, calling our names, knocking on our doors, asking to be let in. He is the quest of God, seeking a lost people.

The mission of Jesus is to save. But His mission to save is not free from trial. He is tempted to abandon trust in His Father and go the way of power, prestige, and public display. In all of these, Jesus uses the word of the scripture and makes fidelity to that word. In His entire ministry, He lived by the word of God. He feeds on that word. Obedience to that word will take Him through trial and temptation to the cross itself, the great sign of our salvation. In Jesus' obedience to the word of God, we are saved.



During this Lent, we can make time to listen to the Word of God through the scripture and make good use of it to fight temptation. And our fidelity to God and His Word will help us greatly to stay away from sin. So, we are invited to let God get close to who we are and how we are.

Traditionally, Lent is a time when we give up some things or take up some things. Whatever we do, it would be a good idea to allow the word of God close. The word comes to question who we are; it comes to support the kind of people we could be. We could make little time— five or ten minutes each day— to let the word from us as it formed Jesus. Let it influence what we do and say. Let the word of God find us so that we can emerge from our hiding places into the peace of His presence.



PEACE BE WITH YOU!

