

March 06, 2022
1st Sunday of Lent
Deut 26:4-10
Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15
Rom 10:8-13
Lk 4:1-13

TEMPTATIONS, SHUT UP!

A man goes to confession and says, "**Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was last month. My sins are – I cursed and had bad thoughts.**" The priest replies, "**My son, did you entertain them?**" The man answers, "**No, Father, they entertain me.**"

A mother walked into the kitchen one day and interrupted her 3-year-old son, who was on top of a chair eating cookies. When she asked what he was doing, the toddler explained, "**Mom, I just climbed up here to smell them, but my tooth got caught.**"

What the two stories have in common? The two stories tell us that the man and the young boy were tempted and gave in to it.

I started with these funny stories of temptations because we are familiar with it. We encounter temptations every day. We yield/submit to some. We repel/resist others.

In today's gospel proclaimed we have heard the **Temptations of the Lord Jesus** in the desert. This gospel proclamation tells us that even the Lord Jesus was not spared from being tempted. He was tempted by the devil with the sinful pleasures of possessions, power, and fame. The Lord Jesus resisted and conquered it through the power of prayer, penance, and the effective use of the Word of God. His actions model for us how to shut down/defeat the devil's temptations.

The temptations the Lord Jesus encountered and won convey to us lessons of strength, wisdom, courage, and self-control. It also teaches us that when we resist temptations, we are proclaiming to the world we are true warriors of God. When we resist temptations, we are telling the devil, "**Get out of my sight! You are not welcome in my life!**" When we resist temptations, we are choosing self-control over intemperance; wisdom over stupidity; courage over fearfulness.

The gospel proclaimed says in the end, "**When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.**" **What does it mean 'for a time'?** It simply means that the devil will come back to lure/entice the Lord Jesus again. **Isn't it,**

we experience that too? We thought that we will no longer encounter the temptation, but it is there again!

Our Lenten journey will be 40 days long just as the Lord Jesus fasted and prayed in the desert for 40 days. Like the Lord Jesus' journey, ours will certainly not be free from temptations. We will be tempted. The devil will unceasingly whisper to us many things like:

- **"Stop coming to Church. Don't pray. It is better to watch television/movies than pray with the community."**
- **"Why abstain from meat on Fridays? It is delicious – just eat it!"**
- **"Don't go to Confession. It's okay to cover up your sins."**
- **"You have worked so hard, and you deserve to enjoy your money. Don't share it with the poor and even to the Church's mission."**
- **"It's okay to be lazy with your faith. There is no need for on-going formation. It is just a waste of time."**
- **"He hurt you. Don't forgive him! Get even!"**
- **"It's all right to accumulate and love things by using people. Don't listen to your priest who says: 'Love people and use things.'"**
- **"You are a hopeless case. Don't believe that you can live a holy life."**
- **"You are suffering from illness/loss of a loved one. You see your God does not love you. He will abandon you."**
- **"Keep the grudge in your heart. Don't make a room for forgiveness."**
- Even inside the Church the devil works overtime whispering to you: **"Don't pay attention to the celebration. Just keep on playing the game on your phone."**
- [To our catechumens – the devil will whisper to you, after you received the Sacraments, words like: **"You got your Sacraments already and so relax and don't study the faith anymore."**]

These are just some of the many things that the devil will whisper to us even after the Lenten Season. I hope and pray that the examples of the Lord Jesus in conquering temptations will be our weapons to come out as victors rather than victims of the devil.

Let me end my homily with another short story. One Sunday morning, upon leaving the Church, the pastor asked a four-year-old boy, **"My son, did you ever experience tempted by the devil?"** The young boy replied, **"Yes, but Jesus tells him to shut up!"**

In this Mass, let us pray for each other that we may have the courage to say to the devil when he tempts us: **"Shut up! My life belongs to the Lord Jesus!"**

God bless and stay safe!