

## Homily 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

We are in the first Sunday of Lent, and we know in every first Sunday of Lent that our Gospel reading presents the scene of 3 classical temptations of Jesus and this year we have it from the Gospel of Matthew 4:1-11. When we hear the temptation of Jesus the first question that may arise in our mind is why Jesus let himself be tempted by the devil after all he was always the Son of God. We can trace an answer to this question in the Letter to Hebrews chapter 4: 11 it says: "he was fully human, one with us in all things except in sin that is why he was tempted like us". Temptations of Jesus also teach us that temptations are not against God's plan and in fact they enhance our spiritual growth. St. Alphonsus says: "it gives great joy to God when he sees us defeating the temptations. When a person defeats the temptations God fills that person with great blessings, crowns him with heavenly joy".

It is also surprising to note that the temptations of Jesus happened immediately after his baptism, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. We normally think the devil comes to sinners first, but the truth is the opposite, the devil's prime targets are always people who live a holy life, who live a saintly life. The reason is that the devil is aware that he does not need to waste his time on anyone who lives in sin because he is already in sin and will faithfully follow his commands.

Another strange thing about temptations is that temptations are always reasonable, they come in attractive wrappings and the devil knows how to hit and when to do it. The first temptation of Jesus was to change the stone into bread. Jesus was in the desert; in a place where no food was available, and he was there for 40 days without food. Hence what was wrong in changing stone into bread since he could easily do that. Again, Jesus was told to jump from the pinnacle of the temple in front of a crowd, to perform a spectacular miracle and make people believe in him, apparently a harmless and reasonable suggestion. The third temptation was also similar, just to bow down to the devil and take the possession of the whole world, a very simple act for a great gain.

The devil will not ask us to do stupid things or unreasonable things, look at our first reading of today how cunningly and convincingly the devil argues with Eve: "God allowed you to eat fruits of all other trees except the one in the middle of the garden why? what is the wrong in eating fruit from that one tree?" Similarly, the devil may ask us what is wrong if we smoke once? What is the wrong if we take little drinks?, What is the wrong if we try little drugs? What is the wrong little infidelity? after all everybody does such things. We know how easily people fall into such traps and become the devil's prey.

Lent is a season given by the Holy Mother Church so that following the footsteps of Jesus who fasted 40 days in the desert we too may through the power of God's word, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving free ourselves from the snares of the devil and to grow more fully into the image of God's Son.