

1 st Sunday of Lent
Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

A. Text/Context

- So, we heard that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days to be tempted by the devil. The Holy Spirit here has a very crucial role in the temptation of Jesus
- The Jews believed that the desert is a dwelling place of demons, and indeed, here is Jesus, face to face with the devil
- And what a time for temptation! Jesus has just finished fasting. After forty days without food and drink, Jesus could have been so famished and hungry. He must be starving and perhaps even dying of dehydration and the devil arrives in this most difficult moment
- And what did the devil use to tempt Jesus? He used bread. The devil said to him: If you are the Son of God command these stones to become loaves of bread
- The devil used food at a time when Jesus feels the pangs of hunger. And we must remember this. It is always the tactic of the devil to tempt us at a time of our greatest moment of need. He makes use of our weakness
- The devil loves to hit our weakest point, where he finds it easy for us to give in to temptations. That's how clever and cunning the devil is!
- But the use of bread here is just a cover up, just a façade because the intent of the devil is really for Jesus to use his power to satisfy his hunger without any effort
- But Jesus responded: One does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. The devil miserably failed with his first attempt
- The 1st temptation is a temptation on the use of power for our own selfish ends. Our adversary wants us to use the power of manipulation and control using our positions of authority and influence
- Now the devil showed Jesus the holy city and stand in the parapet of the temple and said to him: If you are the Son of God throw yourself down because it is written that the

angels will come to support you or else you hit your foot against a stone

- Among the three temptations, the 2nd temptation is the most stupid and the most insensible
- When the World Trade Center was bombed back in September 11, 2001, we see people falling from hundreds of floors above in the hope of saving themselves from the blazing inferno.
- And here is the devil telling Jesus to make a senseless dive, not to save himself but simply to show to the world that the angels will come to protect and carry him
- Isn't that insensible? But, for people who are so engrossed with pride, they will do it because this is a show of power to the world. When our pride and vanity are hurt, we do even the most insensible things just to prove ourselves
- But Jesus answered: You shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Here, the temptation is to test God if he really can do everything. Putting God to the test is tantamount in saying that we do not trust God
- The devil wants us to make a blatant display of power, to show that we are untouchables and everyone at the snap of our fingers will follow us
- Then at a very high mountain, the devil showed to Jesus all the glitters of this world that it will be given to him if he worships the devil; the wealth of all nations in exchange for God. The 3rd temptation
- The devil tempted Jesus to worship a new idol, and that is money, again in exchange for God
- Here in the 3rd temptation, the tactic of the devil is to direct our eyes to the values of the world: fortune and fame, the material riches. The exact opposite of the values of God: humility, and simplicity
- And Jesus answered: You shall worship the Lord your God and him alone shall you serve. And the devil was exorcised and gone

B. Human Situation

- My brothers and sisters, a lot of people will say that we commit sin because we are only human and very weak. That is true, but it is not entirely true. If we operate with this kind

of principle, it is as if, the power of God's grace has no place in our lives

- It is a denial of God's grace to work into our lives. The truth is that if we cooperate with God's grace, we can ward off temptations
- And then a lot of people will also say that: Jesus is a God, he can always refuse temptations. He will have no difficulty because he has the power not to give in to temptations
- But for us, we are only human. This is also true, but again, it is not entirely true because Jesus is also a human being very much like us. Jesus has all the attributes as a human being
- The humanity of Jesus was tested when he cried tears of blood when he prayed to God in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his arrest
- Jesus was almost tempted at that moment not to die on the cross. He was so scared to think of the horrors of crucifixion. As a human being, who would not be afraid of that?
- He was already begging the Father in ardent supplication to remove the cup of suffering! Yet in the end he relented, Father, let your will be done
- Now we ask why is it that Jesus did not give in to temptations. The answer is not because he is the son of God but because he is filled with the Holy Spirit. That is the secret for us Christians so as not to fall into temptations leading to sin
- To be filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean that we look as if other people will think that we are so high floating with God
- To be filled with the HS means that we live a life of sanctity and holiness

C. Challenge

- The readings that we have today all tell us that God allows temptations in order to test us
- In the 1st reading humanity has fallen from grace because of disobedience, but in the 2nd reading, there is an acquittal from disgrace because of the obedience of Jesus
- A Christian who has recourse to the Lord will be delivered from evil. A Christian who relies on the Lord will have no harm because the Holy Spirit will dwell on that person that is why we will be able to resist temptations.

Temptation is not a sin; for as long as one does not give in to it, it is not yet a sin. It becomes a sin only if it is converted or translated into action

- And there is a difference between a sin committed because of malice and the sin committed out of human weakness
- A person who has committed a sin because of malice is like a man who is so jealous of the wealth of his neighbor for so long. Then he makes plans how to acquire all the money his neighbor has and then, finally succeeds
- From the very beginning there is already the ill will to commit the sin. That is malice
- This is different from the man, who happens to come inside a room and then finds a lot of money on top of the table, and he is tempted and he steals. The sin is committed out of human weakness
- We are motivated with malice if from the very beginning there is already the ill will to destroy the reputation of the person
- This is different when you have profaned somebody in public because of the sudden outburst of anger
- Sins committed out of malice are heavier in culpability than the sins committed out of human weakness
- Nevertheless, all of these are forgivable. The grace and the mercy of God always exceed the amount of sin that we commit
- If we will only rely with our own strengths and capabilities, we will never overcome temptations; we will give in to it over and over again. Human strength is not enough, that is why, we need the grace of God
- This is the challenge that the gospel brings us today. We implore God that he will give us the strength of the Holy Spirit
- This is what we pray in the Our Father. Lead us not into temptation, do not bring us to the test but deliver us from evil. We invoke the Spirit of God to dwell in us so we can ward off temptations so they will not be realized into actuality
- Human beings are frail and weak but we will still be tested by God to the limit. But just like the man Jesus, we will overcome temptations if we invoke the name of the Holy Spirit. And God indeed will deliver us from evil