

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT; Cycle – C; March 9th 2025
Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As the forty days of Lent also symbolize the forty days of fasting and prayer of Jesus in the desert, it is fitting that on the first Sunday of Lent we listen to the temptation of Jesus. It seems to be a bit scandalous to see that the Holy One of God is tempted by a devil. Here our point of reflection is not the dramatic acts and words of the devil; rather Jesus' heroic battle against those temptations and the victory he won, which is a great model for us. What the devil proposes Jesus is contrary to the will of his Heavenly Father. The three temptations of Jesus have the same characteristic **that he is tempted to misuse his divine power to achieve cheap popularity among the people.** At the same time, we should not conclude that the devil was following Jesus in person to different locations. Perhaps they were his inner struggles and temptations.

Jesus was about to take up a great mission of the Heavenly Father by which he has to save the mankind. For forty days he has been praying and reflecting over the methods by which he should achieve this goal. As he had the divine power he was tempted to follow an easy path by presenting himself as a miracle worker or powerful political leader. As growing up in Nazareth Jesus also knew that the Jews never expected a purely spiritual Messiah; rather the one who could ascend to the throne of David. They needed a warrior to drive out the Romans from the land and rule over them. The Old Testament prophecies also supported this idea. And the divine power in Jesus was more than enough to achieve these goals and thus he could win the confidence of his people. By turning down each temptation, Jesus set a very good example that what he had to implement was **his Father's plan not his personal agenda.**

The temptations of Jesus symbolically represent the temptations of Adam in the Garden of Eden and the people of Israel in the desert. Both failed badly, but Jesus, the new Adam and new Israel defeated the temptations. And also, the temptations of Jesus are clear sign that those who are called by God for a mission to accomplish, will be tempted to use short cuts. In the Book of Sirach, the author warns us, **“My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity.”** Jesus remained undisturbed and proved that he could win.

During our Lenten journey, we are not asked just to fulfill some resolutions and forget them for the rest of the year. Rather in every Lenten season we should move one more step closer to our Lord and the eternal life. That is why we have to focus on our

personal battle against sins and the same will continue through our life. We all have some habits and addictions to fight against. We all need some changes in different areas of our life. But change is always hard for us. *As human beings, we will always be confronted with the temptations to make wrong choices and seek pleasure and enjoyment in the place where our Lord is not found.* At the end of a day none of us can claim that we were not tempted at any moment. **We live in a society which gives no weight to temptation. Instead, it suggests that whatever I do is acceptable, so far it makes me comfortable and happy.** *Many of us buy into an additional lie of society that it is psychologically unhealthy to deny yourself of things you wish to have.* These days many parents bring up the children in that way. But this is not the right approach. When we lean towards this psychological approach to temptation we are holding the view that doing evil is not wrong at all.

Please remember, as Jesus Christ was also human, by nature, he too had to undergo the temptations; but he overcame them. So he knows how weak we are and hence he can sympathize with us. In the letter to the Hebrews the author comforts the people who are weak and tempted. He says: **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help” (Heb. 4:15-16).** But this great truth should not be a license for us to live the way we like and do whatever we wish to do. Of course God is merciful and forgiving. At the same time, we should not take the mercy of God for granted. In the Book of Sirach, the author warns the ones who are lax in their lives: **“Say not I have sinned, yet what has befallen me? For the Lord bides his time. Of forgiveness, be not overconfident, adding sin upon sin. Say not: “Great is his mercy; my many sins he will forgive. For mercy and anger alike are with him” (Sirach 5:4-6).** Sisters and brothers, instead of rationalizing our sins and justifying our deeds, let us turn to God with all humility and acknowledge our weakness.