

1st March 2020 (1st Sunday in Lent, Year A)

Genesis 2:7-9,3:1-7; Psalm 50(51):3-6,12-14,17; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11.

'... worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone!'

Like the journey of the People of God, from captivity in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land, the season of Lent is our annual journey from being captive to sin to freedom in God! Lent is our wilderness period; we are given time to reflect on our relationship with God, and are once again invited to participate in his death and resurrection, so as to live as children of God, filled with the Spirit at Pentecost! Due to our human frailty, this has to be an annual journey.

The first reading reminds us that, although we carry within us the life of God, we do this imperfectly and, like Adam and Eve, are often not ready to submit ourselves completely to God's authority. Adam and Eve are given a whole garden to wander in and enjoy; they are only prohibited to eat from the fruit of the *'tree of life,'* because in doing so, *'their eyes would be opened and they would be like gods, knowing good and evil.'* Even though we already share in the life of God, we are constantly tempted with the desire of being like gods, able to determine what is right and wrong, becoming masters of life and death! This human temptation flies in the face of who we are called to be: children of a loving Father, obedient to his loving and merciful commands.

The apostle Paul reflects on this reality. Paul is aware that Adam and Eve are symbolic of us all. Like them, we constantly fail and require God to repair the damage caused by sin. In his great love and mercy, God sends us his only Son, dressed up as one like ourselves, to lead us back to himself and save us. Paul is certain that, although our imperfect humanity is prone to sin, God's perfection in love and mercy, through Jesus, will clean us and save us!

Jesus is the Son of God, sent to save us from our disobedience to God. He is like us in everything but sin! Before the start of his ministry, the Spirit takes Jesus out into the desert. This is reminiscent of the people of God of the Old Testament; they too were called *'Son of God,'* and were taken through the desert to test their obedience and submission to God's plan.

Jesus is tested to see if he would be ready to abuse his authority to his own advantage: he is hungry and can turn stones into bread, so why wouldn't he do this to satisfy his hunger! He is tested about his total trust in God: if he throws himself off the pinnacle, God will send his angels to look after him! And finally, about his total obedience to the Father's will. If he accepted Satan's offer of handing over to him all the kingdoms of the world, which, according to Satan, all belong to him, then Jesus would not have to go through the whole painful process of his passion and death.

Jesus is the faithful Son of God who will not turn against the Father. He understands that while daily food is important for us to be able to survive and live a healthy life, we also have the need of our spiritual nourishment; it is God's word that ultimately nourishes our soul. Jesus fully trusts the Father and knows that the Father will always stand beside him. Jesus proclaims that he is in the Father and the Father is in him! Jesus has no need and will refuse to test the Father's love. Finally, Satan orders Jesus to worship him and in return Satan will hand over the whole world to Jesus. Jesus is not ready to bargain with Satan. His aim is to be totally faithful to the Father, even if this brings conflict, pain and suffering.

We are children of God, created in the image and likeness of God and baptised in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, to become sisters and brothers of Jesus. In our journey we are often tempted to abuse our God-given gifts to our own personal advantage, we often doubt God's faithfulness towards us, when we think he delays to respond to our prayers, and we are often ready to bow down in front of the world, instead of witnessing to God's life. Like Adam and Eve, we too want to become like gods, being able to determine what is good and what is evil, independently of God. The good news is that Jesus is there, ready to save us. Our job this Lent is to continue with our journey through the desert, promising our full commitment to God.

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