

## **First Sunday of Lent: Gospel Reflections.** Fr Joseph Sebastian CMI

We started the forty days of our Lenten spiritual journey last Wednesday. We think lent is all about fasting and abstaining from some food. Its food alone is the whole purpose of lent, why did Jesus go to the desert? He could have stayed at his home and said prayers. The main purpose of lent is to create a desert around us. We should focus more on Jesus. When we increase our focus automatically there will be a decrease of distraction.

Another point of surprise is when Jesus was tempted. It was not that he was sleeping or walking in Jerusalem, but right after his baptism from John in Jordan. He was preparing for his public ministry, and at the end of his forty days of prayer he was tempted. This tells us that even if we are praying and prepared there is still the possibility of getting tempted.

Another point is that he was tempted three times. We may be tempted only once, because when we were first tempted, we failed, Jesus passed the first temptation, so he was tempted again and again.

Jesus was tempted by using biblical words. The Devil knows the bible. and he has a clear understanding of everything spiritual. So having something sacramental or spiritual like a bible, a cross, holy water, or holy oil is not going to help us, but only our relation and connection with Jesus is the only way of being rescued in our spiritual journey.

Let's look at the nature of temptations. First physical or biological, second emotional, third is social. These are our three levels of struggle in our daily life. Everyone is struggling at all levels. The devil knows our weak points and moments, so that is when he will come and attack us.

When we are hungry, he offers food. When thirsty he offers drinks, and when we desire some physical things, he offers them to tempt us.

Again, when Jesus was hungry he was asked to make food. What is wrong

with that? We need food and drink for life sustenance. There is nothing wrong with food or drink, or some biological needs like sex etc. The problem is that when satisfaction of sensual pleasure becomes the while purpose of life, we are wrong, when satisfying physical desire in the central value of life, we are tempted.

Another point is making stone into bread. It's not acceptable. Stone is not edible. Asking for a lower grade or low-profile thing to satisfy our needs Is not acceptable. For example, Sex is okay in married life. We cannot substitute sex with pornography.

Second, asking to jump from the most important building of the Jews that is the temple. The owner of himself. Satisfying our inflated ego, having ambition with excessive pride and vainglory is wrong, wanting to be famous in a day, or going for negative publicity for fame can satisfy our pride.

Third, connected with power. Wanting power is not wrong on its own. When power becomes the supreme value of your life by manipulating and dominating others for power, it is wrong. Our values and ethics of power should be reconsidered.

These temptations have a hierarchy. They string from the basics of life, like physical, biological, and sensual needs to satisfy the ego and ending with power. We all have some problems in these areas where Jesus was tempted. have everyday struggles in our thoughts and desires. Temptation itself is not a sin. When we give ourselves into it becomes action and becomes sin. Again, temptation is a test of faith. If we are not tempted, how do we know the depth of our faith. Let temptation come, and when we try to overcome it is then we realize our real strength of faith. Temptation is a part of our lives until the last moment. Jesus overcame and defeated the devil by using biblical words. There is a bible verse for every situation in our life to overcome the devil. Jesus used verses from Leviticus chapter six and eight to fight Satan. We can also use it. Finally, we see Jesus says Be gone Satan! Do not be soft! Be firm! So, we should take firm stands in our tempting situations. chase Satan away.