

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew (*Matthew 4:1-11*) *The Temptation of Jesus*

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards He was famished. The tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him to the holy city and placed Him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You,' and 'On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not dash Your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to Him, "All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.'" Then the devil left Him, and suddenly angels came and waited on Him. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection: *Send the tempter fleeing*

He fasted forty days and forty nights... It is significant that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into fasting in the desert. Jesus was preparing Himself for His public ministry. He needs to strengthen Himself spiritually as He was borne incarnate as a man. Jesus considered fasting important enough to show it by His own example in the desert and the trouble He went to to teach His disciples how to fast: don't look glum, wash our faces, neaten our hair and be sure no one knows that we are fasting (cf Matthew 6:16-17). Fasting detaches one from the comfort zone, strengthens self-control over the bodily senses and provides protection against temptation directed against human weakness. The three enemies of the soul are the weakness of human flesh, the attraction of the riches and temporary glory of this passing world, and the devil.

All temptation offers some kind of self-gratification. All sin is the direct result of disordered self-love. Satan is cunning and he will present his temptation at a point when the person is at his weakest. He tried to make Jesus break His fast by tempting Him to turn the stones into bread. However, Jesus, though very hungry, has already placed His Father's Will above all things including His own pressing physical needs at the moment. Once I place God's will above my own personal inclinations and desires, it is extremely difficult for Satan to break through this holy barrier. This is because when a person has sincerely made a decision to do God's Will, she has already gone through her mind all the costs of doing it and has already mentally accepted it. So when a temptation presents itself to stop her from following God's Will, the temptation will not be too strong for her. For example, a person who is sincerely working on the virtue of humility is unlikely to retaliate even when she is accused unjustly. Similarly will be the case for a heart that is guarded by holy love.

This is why it is important to constantly examine my own heart for hidden disorderly self-love and self-pride. There are always blind corners in every heart. When I have a strong desire to do God's Will, God gives me the grace to resist the temptation that hinders me from doing it. When a soul begins to put her self desires above God and neighbour, she opens herself to temptation. **Self knowledge of one's own weaknesses provides a defence against temptation.** I must look into my own heart and learn to recognize the ways of temptation Satan is using against me so as to block these ports of entry into my heart.

Satan is very pleased when he can tempt a soul to lack of trust in God. Satan does so by pulling the heart out of the present moment and into the future. He presents the soul with every sort of reason not to trust, and every sort of possible events that may occur contrary to trust. Even Jesus is tempted to test his Father's protection. A deep trust in God is a strong defence against temptation. Again a deep trust in God needs a movement of the free will. I must convincingly decide in my heart that God is worthy of my trust and to demonstrate this trust whenever I am tempted.

Conversation with Our Lord

Precious Lord, You allowed Yourself to be tempted by the devil in order to teach me how to deal with temptation in my life. Teach me how to mortify my senses perfectly. Help me to love God above all else and to put Your Will first in my life. Illuminate my conscience and show me all the hidden and secret disorderly self-love and pride in my heart. Purify and transform my heart so that I can trust in You deeply. Immaculate Heart of Mary, give great resolve and strength to my holy desires. Thank You Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.