

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of James (*James 1: 12-15*)

Blessed is the man who perseveres in temptation, for when he has been proved he will receive the crown of life that He promised to those who love Him. No one experiencing temptation should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God is not subject to temptation to evil, and He Himself tempts no one. Rather, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - Why God allows His Children to be tempted

Jesus was subjected to temptation throughout His time on earth. After Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert, He was hungry and weak. The devil chose this time to tempt Him not once but three times continuously. In the first time, the devil tempted Jesus to change the stones into bread since He was so hungry. At the second time, the devil tempted Jesus to throw Himself down the top of the temple to prove that the angels would protect Him as Scripture said. In the third time, Jesus was tempted to take a short cut to regain God's Kingdom on earth by worshipping Satan who claimed it was his to give away. In the three situations, Jesus quoted the appropriate Scripture verse to defeat Satan. Such is the power of God's Word when proclaimed with faith.

Jesus came in the flesh to raise humanity from the Fall. To do this, He submitted Himself in the flesh to the same temptations that befell mankind. By overcoming the first temptation in the desert when He refused to turn the stones into bread, Jesus gained all the graces we need to overcome temptations of the flesh. By overcoming the second temptation when He refused to submit to pride to prove to Satan the angels would protect Him, Jesus gained all the graces for us to overcome our pride. By overcoming the third temptation when He refused to take the sinful short-cut to regain God's Kingdom, Jesus gained for us the graces to take the long, narrow path of Truth over the short-cut of compromise and sin. God, the Heavenly Father deems it in order to subject Jesus to trials and temptation so that Jesus may "learn obedience" in the flesh and become a perfect man in order to intercede for and save all souls. *Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered; and when He was made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9).* Having experienced the same temptations that sinners are subject to, Jesus, as our Saviour and High Priest, is able to understand our plight better. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).*

To strengthen our faith and build up our character. Through our own weaknesses due to our fallen nature and concupiscence, we are subjected to temptation always and in many ways by the devil. God allows this for our own good and that of others because in every temptation God makes available all the graces needed to overcome any and all temptations that we may encounter in our life. *God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial He will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).* It is only through testing and trials that we learn to open our hearts to trust God and to build up our faith, perseverance and self-control. Experience is a great school of learning. *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (James 1:2-3).* Endurance strengthens the character which paves the way to greater faith in and love for God.

To prove our faith in and love for God. The motive of Satan behind every temptation is to lead us to break God's laws and endanger our salvation. Jesus tells us that we prove our love for God by adhering to His teachings and commandments. *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14:15).* In the same way, Jesus tells us that He shows the world that He loves His Heavenly Father by carrying out every command of the Father (cf. John 14:31). Thus, our obedience and allegiance to God must be out of love and not out of unholy fear. *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us (Romans 8:18).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, by the hidden pride in my heart, I subject myself to temptations of unholy fear, unrighteous anger, imagined insult, unfounded suspicion and useless anxiety. Strengthen mightily my love for and faith in You so that I am made strong in Your grace to withstand the onslaught of Satan. Through the cruel crowning of Your Head with thorns during Your Passion, fill me with Your profound humility so that pride which opens the door to Satan will have no place in my soul. Let love, faith, humility and the Sacraments guard my heart and mind from temptation. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk