

## **HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis**

**“Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that come from the mouth of God.”**

March 1, 2020

First Sunday in Lent (Year A)

Gen2:7-9, 3:1-7; Rom.5:12-19; Matt.4:1-11

After Jesus' was baptized by John the Baptist at the River Jordan, he was led by the Spirit of God to withdraw into the wilderness of Judea - a vast desert wilderness that was mostly uninhabitable and full of danger: danger from scorching heat by day and extreme cold at night, danger from wild animals and scorpions, plus the deprivation of food and scarcity of water.

Why did Jesus choose such a barren, lonely place for a sustained period of prayer and fasting? What compelled Jesus to seek solitude, away from his family and friends, for such a lengthy period?

In other words, was it simply a test to prepare him for his mission? Or did Satan want to lure him into a trap? The word “tempt” in English usually means to entice someone to do what is wrong or forbidden. The scriptural word used here also means “test” in the sense of proving and assessing someone to see if they are prepared and ready for the task at hand. For instance, we test flight pilots to see if they are fit to fly under all conditions, including times of adverse turbulence, storms, and poor visibility.

In like manner, God tests his people to see if they are ready to follow and serve him without reservation or compromise. Thus, Jesus was no exception to this pattern of testing and preparation for the mission his Father gave him. And so, led into the wilderness for 40 days without food and little shelter, he was left alone in this harsh and austere environment to wrestle with the temptation to seek an easy or comfortable course that would avoid pain and hardship, humiliation and rejection, suffering and death on a cross.

The Holy Scriptures call this “tempter” by many names, the devil and Satan (Rev 12:9), Beelzebub the prince of demons (Lk 11:15; Matt 12:24), the evil one (Matt 13:38) and the father of lies (John 8:44).

Where did Jesus find the strength to survive the desert's harsh conditions and the tempter's seductions? Fasting on physical food, he fed on God's word, prayed, and found strength in doing his Father's will. “Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that come from the mouth of God”, says the Lord. Indeed, Jesus was tempted like us and he overcame sin, not

by his own human effort but by the grace and strength which his Father gave to him. He had to renounce his will for the will of his Father.

How can we also overcome sin and gain freedom over our unruly desires and the lies of Satan and the world and become pleasing to God?

Jesus basically teaches us, that we can succeed through Prayer and Abstinence. Hence, fasting can be done for a variety of reasons, i.e. to gain freedom from bad habit, addiction, or vice, to share in the suffering of those who go without, or to grow in our hunger for God and for the things of Heaven. As St. Basil the Great once said:

*“Take heed that you do not make fasting to consist only in abstinence from meats. True fasting is to refrain from vice. Shred to pieces all your unjust contracts. Pardon you neighbors. Forgive them their trespasses.”*

Satan will surely tempt us, and he will try his best to get us to choose our will over God's will. “He (Satan) goes about like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour”. (1 Pt 5:8). But if he can't make us renounce our faith or sin mortally, he will then try to get us to make choices that will lead us, little by little, away from what God wants for us.

Therefore, getting rid of some of these vices, whether heavy-duty or not, is what the Church is trying to get us to do as we begin this holy season. May this Lent give us greater strength to resist temptation. For, “Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that come from the mouth of God”, says the Lord.