

Temptations: Moments of Grace or Sin?

“Jesus’ temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah....By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 540).

Today’s Gospel from St. Luke invites us to reflect through the examples of Jesus’ victory over his temptations on how to overcome the temptations of our lives. To be tempted is not sinful, rather it can be a moment of grace, but to allow temptation to overcome us is sinful. Jesus through his victory over his temptations was equipped with the grace to continue his ministry. As the case of Jesus’ temptations, we are always tempted through our attractions, desires, and tendencies. The three temptations of Jesus centered on his attractions and desires (Pleasures from food, Power and Glory).

Jesus was first tempted on food because the devil knew that he was hungry. Secondly, he was tempted on his primary mission of bringing all people to God by asking him to worship him so that he will give him everything; and finally, he was tempted on his miraculous power because he knew that Jesus had the power. Jesus in each of the temptations used the power of the Word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 6:13, & Deuteronomy 6:16) to refute and contradict the gimmicks of the devil. As St. Paul reminds us in the second reading today “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart,” the Word of God we read and listen to is meant to serve as a stronghold to us in overcoming the temptations of our lives.

As we undertake the three Cardinal Works (Prayer, Fasting, & Almsgiving) during this holy season of Lent, let them be ways through which we overcome different temptations that assail us. Let our prayers help us to overcome the temptations of doubt and lack of faith in the face of difficulties of life. Also, let our fasting and abstinence; help us to be selfless and self-giving (Isaiah 58: 1-9). Finally, let our almsgiving and charitable works, help us to be more sensitive to the pains and sufferings of people around us. By and large, let the works we undertake this season help us to turn the temptations of our lives into moments of grace. Amen.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4: 15-16).