

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A

THEME: NOBODY IS ABOVE TEMPTATION

Today, we celebrate the first Sunday of Lent. Every Lenten season gives us the opportunity to reflect on our faith journey and the battle against sin and temptation.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus shows us the importance of our Lenten discipline and exercises. He demonstrates how we can triumph over evil, even in our fragile human nature. Anticipating his spiritual warfare, He fasted for forty days and forty nights, in fervent prayers and meditation on the word of God. Hence, He was battle ready and triumphed over the devil's wicked scheme.

The first reading shows us that all human bragging comes to nothing. We are mere dust. This underlines our initial insignificance; only the breath of God in us made all the difference. If we dispense with God, we risk being stripped of all glory and returned to the dust of eternal damnation.

All that glitters are not gold. The devil only offers false hopes and empty promises. See how he took advantage of the unhealthy cravings of Adam and Eve, offering them false hopes and false notion of knowledge and freedom. The devil pretended to be offering them something more than what God has given to them. Regrettably, they trusted the devil more than God. What a shame! Immediately, their eyes "were opened", and they realized they had been duped, ridiculed and stripped of their true dignity. They saw the emptiness of their blind pursuits. Vanity of vanities! all is vanity (Eccl. 1: 2).

My dear friends in Christ, the devil is no respecter of persons. He even dared to tempt Jesus, attempting to take advantage of His Identity and Personality. He also tried to exploit his hunger and his position as heir to God's kingdom. Jesus remained focused; He knew that He was hungry by choice. He knew that His power and possession were not under any danger. Standing on the word of God, Jesus repelled the devil on all fronts, saying "It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word, that comes from the mouth of God." "It is written: You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." And finally, "Get away Satan! It is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and only Him shall you serve."

My dear friends in Christ, from our Gospel reading, and the second reading of this mass, we can see that where Adam and Eve failed, Jesus succeeded. Like Jesus, we must anchor our lives on the word of God, on faith, prayer and fasting, in order to prevail against the persistent onslaught of the devil. Remember the advice of St. Peter, "Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him strong in faith (1Pet. 5: 8- 9).

We pray at this mass, that God will give us the grace to always overcome the evil scheme of the devil, so that we will share from the glory of Christ. Amen.