

First Sunday of Lent Year C

Readings: *Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Romans 10:8b-13, Luke 4:1-13, Ps. 91:1-2, 9-16*

Theme: The Temptations

"Jesus answered him, it is written, worship the Lord your God, and serve only him"

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: Amen.

My dear friends, on Ash Wednesday we began the period of Lent. It is a period of fasting and abstinence. It is a period when we look back on the journey so far and count the mileage and the cost. A time, when in our journey we pause and repair the damage done and renew and refresh ourselves.

Today, we join the church of God worldwide in making reparations for our past offences and promise not to repeat our past mistakes. Lent is a time of the three Rs:

Reflection, Recollection and Reconciliation

As on other Sunday, we use the readings of today as a guide to our reflection.

In the first reading, we read that in the religious, social and political crisis of Israel during the time of the Kings, Deuteronomy called Israel to reformation and renewal. Harvest Festival offered a suitable opportunity. In a solemn confession recited as they offered the first fruits of the crops, the people recalled their wanderings with the patriarchs and the oppression in Egypt from which God delivered them through Moses. God had heard their cry in times of need and had delivered them. In gratitude for this, they remain loyal to him.

In the second reading, Paul in his letter to the Romans reflects on the word of Deuteronomy (30:14), understanding by it, not the commandments brought by Moses, but the salvation won by Christ. This salvation is not a private affair but a matter of public confession, Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). Neither must it be merely a formula of words; it is to be a belief rooted in the heart. In the past only Israel called upon Yahweh but the coming of Jesus Christ has changed all that. The coming of Jesus Christ has changed all the legal requirements for approach to God. The relationship between God and man is no longer the relationship

between an earner and an assessor, between a judge and a man standing at the bar of judgement. Because Jesus Christ lived and brought his message to men, Man is no longer faced with the task of satisfying God's justice. He can only accept God's love; he has no longer to win God's favour. He has to take the grace and love and mercy which God freely offers.

The Gospel, a familiar story narrates the temptations of Jesus after his baptism.

At this time, Jesus was about to begin his campaign. Before a man begins his campaign, he must choose his method. The temptations of Jesus tell us the path Jesus chose. He rejected the way of glory and chose the way of the cross and suffering.

All three temptations of Jesus come down to the same thing in the end. To put material things and his own glory first, and Spiritual things and God, second, if at all.

These are the major temptations of his church as a whole, and each and everyone, of us who are members.

The temptations of Jesus in the wilderness challenge us to face up to ourselves and the deep down reality of sin in our lives and the need for a change of heart. As long as we are alive, we will be faced with temptations for it is a universal experience of humankind. Part of the tapestry of life is that we will always be tested by evil. It is comforting to know that when temptation comes our way that Jesus was there before us. He was tempted, as we are tempted, like us in all things but sin. It is so easy to be led astray, to be dazzled by the riches of this world, and to lose sight of the basic purpose of life. We are all impressed by the quick fix and easy life, which are momentarily satisfying without taking into account its more permanent value. There is a wilderness and dark shadows within our being and despite our best efforts we fail to live up to what is expected of us. Self-importance, arrogance, pretence and pride are but some of the demons that continue to drag us down. Often we place ourselves high that it is difficult to imagine who is better than us.

Lent is a season for coming back to the Lord. We are often asked what we are giving up for Lent. Maybe, it is time for getting back to the things we have neglected. We are encouraged to commit ourselves to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer can take many forms, like attending the Stations of the Cross or doing it in your family, it could be reading the

Bible or other books. It could be silent and private prayer. Fasting is one of the core disciplines of Christianity. Along with being part of the process for making amends for our sins, it is a traditional way to acknowledge one's dependence on God. If it does nothing else, it reminds us that while one third of the world is suffering from over consumption the other two thirds are dying from hunger and malnutrition. The money we set aside for worthwhile charitable causes can bring freedom and a fresh start to poorest of people.

Lent is a time for drawing closer to God, and through repentance, conversion and a change of heart to reflect on what he has done by bringing us salvation.

In this way, we prepare ourselves spiritually for Easter.

Heavenly Father, pour out your blessing upon us. May this Lenten season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving be a time of spiritual growth in our lives: Help us to understand that when we stumble and fall, you are there to lift us up. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.