

## HOMILY 1<sup>ST</sup> SUN LENT YRC 2019

There was a 20/20 episode a number of years ago where they tested 4 year children's ability to resist temptation. They were placed in a room with two or three M&Ms in front of them. They were told that if they waited for 5 minutes to eat the M&Ms, they could have a whole bag. All of the kids really tried, but only half of them could wait the 5 minutes.. They could not resist the temptation. Hopefully as we get older our ability to resist temptation increases, but not always. There is something very appealing about the evil we are tempted to do, that is why it is a temptation. Mae West once said: "To err is human, but it feels divine." St. Augustine once prayed: "Lord make me pure, but not yet." And the advertisement: "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." It is an invitation to give into temptation and sin and then leave it all behind. It does not work that way.

In the Gospel reading Jesus is tempted three times with three different types of temptation. The first, Jesus has been fasting for 40 days and he is hungry. He is tempted to perform a miracle and turn a stone into bread. He resists this temptation. Jesus has the power to perform miracles but he is very careful how he uses this power. He performs miracles as a sign of who he is and he always performs miracles to help other people. He never uses his power to perform miracles for selfish gain. We are tempted to engage in all types of earthly pleasures. Some of them are clearly sinful and we must refrain from them all together. Others are simple pleasures in life and as long as you are not overly attached to them, they are ok. But when we become overly attached that is when they become sinful. You need to decide what these are for you and fast from them. It may be unhealthy food or drink. Maybe you are over indulging. Maybe it is social media. Are you wasting way too much time with this? Are you using it as a

way to embarrass or demean others? Is this a way to gossip? Do you need to fast from these? The remedy for being overly attached to things of this earth is fasting from them.

Next, Jesus is offered power and glory over the entire world if he just worships the devil. Jesus refuses. Sometimes we are tempted to do things that are wrong to gain power and glory, to get a particular position, to get promoted at work, cheating to get good grades. That is wrong and we have to resist this temptation. We also have to look at the power and glory that we have legitimately earned and see if we are using it properly. The remedy for misusing power and glory is almsgiving. Those of us who are doing well financially have a responsibility to give to those who do not have enough. Another form of almsgiving is acts of kindness. If we are in a position of power over others are we using it to help them or are we using it for selfish gain? If we have been given a lot we need to give back.

In the third temptation Jesus is tempted to throw himself off the parapet of the temple to force his Father to save him. Jesus came to earth in a human body to do the will of his Father, not to tell his Father what to do. Sometimes we like to tell God what to do. Sometimes we pray for what we want and if we do not get it right away we say that prayer is a waste of time. The remedy for this is persistence in prayer. We are here on this earth as disciples of Jesus Christ to do his will. We need to enter into a relationship with God in prayer and this must be a two way relationship. If we do not get what we want when we want it, maybe things are not in place yet. For example, maybe the job will come but it is not open right now. Maybe you are looking for the wrong things. Maybe God has a better idea. If you are persistent in prayer, you will be open to God's plan for your life. You can avoid all three temptations that are included in the Gospel reading today through fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the three pillars of Lent. What do you need to do?