

February 21, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have begun our Lenten journey into the spiritual desert with Jesus to offer along with His sacrifice on the Cross our prayers, fasting, acts of charity for others, and other sacrifices. God our Father worked the beginning of a new creation during Jesus' fasting in the desert. Jesus reversed the "No" of Adam and Eve to God, and their "Yes" to Satan's lie, by saying "No" to Satan and all His empty promises in the desert. In so doing, Jesus continued His "Yes" to the Father's plan and finished it on Calvary, never once giving in to the deceit of the Devil. Jesus wants to continue to reverse the fall of Adam and Eve in us through our obedience to the Father's will and the Holy Spirit's overcoming of temptation in our lives during this holy season.

In today's reading from Genesis, we are reminded that God made humanity new again after it had become corrupted by evil before the Great Flood. In and through Noah, He recreated humanity, and all creation, again in His holy image and likeness. He used 40 days of flooding to wash evil and sin from the face of the earth. We are reminded that He does the same in us through our reception of the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance. During Lent, we are called to renew our commitment to our baptismal promises by repenting of our sins, doing penance, and making a good Confession during these days. If we do so, we will be made anew in the Father's image in preparation for both Easter and our own Resurrection at the end of time. Heavenly Father, we ask you to wash our souls clean through Lenten penance and the Sacrament of Reconciliation as you washed the earth clean from sin and evil during the time of Noah:

When the LORD saw how great was man's wickedness on earth,
and how no desire that his heart conceived
was ever anything but evil,
he regretted that he had made man on the earth,
and his heart was grieved.

So the LORD said:

"I will wipe out from the earth the men whom I have created,
and not only the men,
but also the beasts and the creeping things and the birds of the air,
for I am sorry that I made them."

But Noah found favor with the LORD.

Then the LORD said to Noah:

"Go into the ark, you and all your household,
for you alone in this age have I found to be truly just.
Of every clean animal, take with you seven pairs,
a male and its mate;
and of the unclean animals, one pair,
a male and its mate;
likewise, of every clean bird of the air, seven pairs,
a male and a female,

and of all the unclean birds, one pair,
a male and a female.
Thus you will keep their issue alive over all the earth.
Seven days from now I will bring rain down on the earth
for forty days and forty nights,
and so I will wipe out from the surface of the earth
every moving creature that I have made.”
Noah did just as the LORD had commanded him.

As soon as the seven days were over,
the waters of the flood came upon the earth. Genesis 6:5-8, 7:1-5, 10

And in today's first reading we hear of the new earth and the promise that God gave Noah to never flood the earth again. May we never lose the grace of Baptism that has washed us clean and began a new creation in us! Additionally, in order to preserve the life of God, Sanctifying Grace, in our souls, which we gained through the waters of Baptism, we are reminded to persevere in our battle against temptation as Jesus did in the desert.

Our Gospel this week reminds us of Jesus' encounter with the Devil in the desert:

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert,
and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.

He was among wild beasts,
and the angels ministered to him.

After John had been arrested,
Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:
“This is the time of fulfillment.
The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel.” *Mark 1:12-15*

This week we have a helpful article which teaches us about temptation and the spiritual weapons Jesus and the Church give us to be victorious over sin in our lives: **Fighting the Good Fight: Resisting Temptation - By Monsignor Charles M. Mangan Catholic Online +J.M.J.+**

Introduction – There has been a growing interest in the various manifestations of Satan in our midst. Perhaps due to the use of social communications, we have become cognizant more than ever of the troubling increase of involvement with Satanic cults, especially among the young. This awareness, however, does not necessarily mean that we understand any better the workings of the Devil around us. On the contrary, one could argue persuasively that with the dearth of substantive catechesis during the last forty years, Catholics may be more ignorant than ever of the Evil One and his pervasive presence.

In discussing the workings of Satan, many spiritual authors focus on two categories: 1.) Extraordinary Satanic Activity, which covers varied evil disturbances like external pain caused

by demons, diabolical possession, diabolical oppression, diabolical obsession, diabolical infestation and diabolical subjugation; 2.) Ordinary Satanic Activity, which, in a word, is temptation. This pamphlet addresses very briefly the second category, namely the workings of Satan in his "ordinary" activity, that is, temptation. Concerning the first category, for further information about extraordinary Satanic activity, one should have recourse to an approved author; if some diabolical disturbance seems present, one should approach a competent spiritual director and even the Local Bishop.

Our Three Spiritual Foes - There are valuable treatments of the important subject of temptation. This writer is especially indebted to that of the well-known French Sulpician priest, the Very Reverend Father Adolphe Tanquerey, D.D. (1854-1932), presented in his classic *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* (Tournai: Desclee & Co., 1930, second and revised edition, translated by the Reverend Father Herman Branderis, S.S., A.M., pages 101-119 and 427-436). We have three spiritual foes: 1) the flesh; 2) the world; 3) the Devil. The flesh is often called "concupiscence," which is the inclination to sin deep within us. The world and the Devil are external to us, but also very powerful threats to our true and lasting happiness. Here let us say a word about each, with a nod to Father Tanquerey for his assistance. 1) We base our description of the flesh on the famous passage of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist (+ circa 100 A.D.) in his First Letter (2:16): "For all that is in the world, the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, is not from the Father but is from the world." Therefore, the spiritual foe we term the flesh may be further divided into: A) the concupiscence of the flesh, which is the inordinate love of sensual pleasures; B) the concupiscence of the eyes, which is all unwholesome curiosity and inordinate love of the goods of our earth; C) the pride of life, which is excessive self-love and is accompanied by vanity. 2) The world signifies "not the total aggregate of men upon the earth, among whom are found both choice souls and irreligious men; but the sum-total of those who oppose Jesus Christ and are the slaves of the threefold concupiscence." Identified as such are unbelievers, the indifferent, hardened sinners and those who believe and even practice their religion but do so mired in a moral laxity. 3) The Devil is representative of Satan and the Fallen Angels. The Devil was jealous of the contentment experienced by Adam and Eve and so tempted them to sin. Ever since he was successful in the Garden of Eden, the Devil has continued his efforts against men and women, boys and girls with the hideous goal of leading all human persons away from their beloved and loving Creator.

Ordinary Satanic Activity--Temptation. Temptation comes to us from the flesh, the world and the Devil. Father Tanquerey defined temptation as "a sollicitation to evil on the part of our spiritual foes." God allows us to be tempted so that we will merit Heaven, but He does not tempt us directly. Temptation is a means of purification and an instrument of spiritual progress. By temptation, we grow in humility and love of God. Some persons are tempted frequently and intensely, while others are tempted less and without being deeply agitated. The great Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Bishop and Doctor of the Church, taught that there are three distinct but related phases in each temptation: A) suggestion, which is the proposal of some evil; B) pleasure, which happens when after the moving towards the suggested evil, there is some attendant delight; C) consent, which is when the will delights in the pleasure, willingly enjoys it and yields to it. Sin occurs only when there is consent.

Our Response to Temptation—When we overcome temptation, our souls are aided remarkably. A magnificent triumph results when temptation is shunned. Father Tanquerey isolated three things that we must do to conquer temptation: 1) forestall temptation; 2) battle against it; 3) thank God after a victory and rise quickly after any fall. 1. Vigilance and prayer are required to forestall temptation. Regarding vigilance, we assert: presumption that compels us to place ourselves unnecessarily in the midst of temptation must be avoided, as must vain terrors which increase the danger and harmful occasions of sin--persons, places, things and events. When prayer is added to vigilance, in the words of Father Tanquerey, we become "invincible. God is concerned in our success, for it is He Whom the Devil assails in us, it is His work which He would wreck in us." 2) Resistance against temptation is indispensable. Serious temptation must be confronted: A) promptly, without hesitation; B) energetically, with determination and strength; C) perseveringly, with tenacity; D) humbly, which "attracts grace, and grace gives us the victory." 3) Temptation vanquished means that the blessed person must render gratitude to Almighty God, for from Him derives the conquest. Sin surrendered to is an invitation to the repentant sinner "to humble himself sincerely before God, to acknowledge his incapacity to do any good, to place his trust in God, to be all the more cautious, and return to the practice of penance. A fault thus repaired will not constitute a serious obstacle to perfection." We do not throw ourselves headlong into temptation without real necessity; however, neither do we fail to see that when God permits us to be tempted, amazing spiritual progress is possible.

Conclusion - Satan is indeed active in our world by way of temptation, but when we pray daily, receive the Sacraments (particularly Confession and the Most Holy Eucharist) worthily and often, perform acts of charity and self-denial, avail ourselves of the intercession of Our Blessed Mother and the Angels and Saints and avoid the near occasion of sin, we increase in Sanctifying Grace and overcome the temptations emanating from the flesh, the world and the Devil." (*Taken from: <https://www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=5143>*)

May all of us be strengthened to be victorious over temptation this Lent and always!

In Christ who fasted and prayed in the desert,
Fr. Derda, Fr. Steve, Deacon Russ, Deacon Ed