

Confronting our demons 3/10/19

a. Jesus was tempted not only three times

I presume we are all familiar with the story of the temptations of Jesus. We sure know about how the devil came to test him after his 40-day fasting in the desert before he started his public ministry. This certainly was not the only time that Jesus was tempted. The gospel passage closes with the line that ‘the devil departed from him for a time’. That means he was going to come again. He came back over and over again to tempt Jesus to follow his own will rather than that of the Father who sent him. You may recall that in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed his way out of another temptation to set the cross aside. Even on the cross he was tempted again through the words of that wretched thief who told Jesus to save himself and save them. No matter how many temptations came to Jesus he overcame them through the power of God which he very often sought after in prayer. So, let us learn from Jesus in dealing with our own temptations.

b. What the three temptations mean

In the first test the devil said to Jesus ‘if you are the Son of God turn this stone into bread’ (Luke 4: 3). Jesus’ response was profound: ‘man must not live by bread alone...but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’. We are also tempted very often by our needs and cravings. Let us make the response of Jesus our own ‘man must not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’.

In the second temptation the devil asked Jesus to worship him (can you imagine that?) so that he will receive authority and splendor. Jesus response was ‘worship the Lord your God and him alone must you serve’. This is clearly the temptation to set God aside in the pursuit of power, wealth and worldly allurements. It is about being concerned with the world and leaving faith aside. Godlessness is the worship of ourselves and material things. Jesus’ response invites us to worship God alone and always. This is our call as his children. But let’s remember that the best way to worship him is to do so in truth and in spirit.

The final temptation was when the devil asked Jesus to throw himself down from the temple parapet so that the angels will hold him up lest he dashes his foot against a stone. Jesus told him: Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Putting the Lord to the test means failing to operate as people endowed with wisdom. This is a kind of presumption. It is like saying that eternal life is

for all so I do not need to work for it. It is when you relinquish your part as man to work for your salvation.

c. In our own lives

Our human condition itself, as a result of the fall, tempts us away from the living God. Temptations are therefore part of our day: from the little whispers of our minds to big actions that we take. Every person has his or her list of temptations: Things that threaten to draw us away from God. Lent is the moment to draw strength from God to overcome our demons. Let's watch out also for the modern-day temptations: subjective morality, culture of consumerism, unbridled use of technology. Every temptation wants us to set God aside and to exalt our own selves.

d. Supporting those who are going through trial moments

Aware that temptations and trials are so much part of our calling let us learn to pray for one another especially those who are going through tested moments like sickness, vocation crisis, marital difficulties, mid-life crisis etc.

Let us pray that God will deliver us from temptations.

Fr. Francis