

Satan decided to tempt the parishioners of one small parish whose parishioners were very religious and pious. They used their time, talents and treasures to serve the church and God. So, the Satan with two horns on the head and one long tail stood in the church while mass was going on and the priest was preaching about temptation. Everyone started screaming, some fainted including the priest and some ran for the doors.

Within no time whole church was empty except one old man who remained seated calmly.

Satan walked up to him and said, "Don't you know who I am?"

The man replied, "Yep, sure do."

Satan asked, "Are you not scared of me?"

"No," said the man.

Satan asked, "Why are you not afraid of me?"

The man replied, "Welcome home with me," he said, "I'm surprised you don't recognize me...I've been married to your sister for 36 years!"

Hearing this tit for tat answer, the Satan vanished in the thin air.

In today's Gospel Jesus also gives a tit for tat answers to Satan and he failed to tempt Jesus and disappeared.

Main theme of today's readings is temptation. Therefore, it will not be wrong to call the 1st Sunday of Lent, "*The Temptation Sunday*." This is Year A of the Liturgical Cycle, and so today we have St. Matthew's account of the temptations of Jesus, and strikingly, they are paralleled with the temptations of Adam and Eve in the first reading.

Temptations are usually on the three basic human instincts – survival, possession and recognition.

Survival instinct is very strong in human beings. No one wants to die. Even if someone is in great misery, still one wants to live. People who have lost everything, still, they want to survive want to live. And in order to fulfill this instinct, people can do anything, good or bad, steal, murder or other evil things. So, the Satan attacks Eve on this instinct. He tempts her to eat the forbidden fruit. Jesus also is attacked on the same instinct of survival. He was hungry without food for forty days. I don't think, any one of you here knows what it feels like to be hungry after fasting for forty days. The Satan suggests Jesus easy way out to feed himself by turning stones into bread.

The second temptation is on the instinct of recognition and power.

The instinct of power and prestige is also very strong in not only in humans but also in animals. And we can say all the wars, killings, genocide, slavery are based on this instinct. Animals also fight for their boundaries.

The Satan tempts Eve on this instinct. “your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods”. To have power like God. Satan uses this instinct of power and prestige while tempting Jesus. Satan suggests Jesus to do something spectacular to demonstrate his power like jumping from the pinnacle of the temple. His sudden appearance in public place from nowhere will give evidence of being the messiah and his mission is complete. People will recognize him know him as Messiah, as Savior.

The third temptation is on the instinct of possessions. This is also very strong instinct. To possess something or somebody, people will be willing to do anything good or bad. So, the Satan tempts both Eve and Jesus on this instinct. Satan says to Eve “You will know what is good and what is evil.”. Meaning you will possess the knowledge like God. And coming to Jesus, the Satan offers a very nice proposal to possess the whole world.

“All these I shall give to you,  
if you will prostrate yourself and worship me”

The temptations that Jesus faced at the commencement of his public life were not his last either. Concluding the description of the temptation of Jesus the Evangelist Luke indicates, “When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time” (4:13). Please take note of it, “for a time”. Luke does not say that the devil, accepting defeat left, him alone “forever”, no, only “for a time”, only for a short time. After this convincing triumph over Satan Jesus could not “live happily ever after” as our fairy tales conclude! On his way Jesus often had to bump into Satan who approached him in various disguises.

*Temptations do come to all of us also in our lives – in various disguise of course. They are part and parcel of our life. Even though Jesus was Son of God, he had to face temptations. It shows that no one can remain without being tempted. Temptation of Jesus is teaching us an important truth. Neither baptism nor confirmation, nor religious vows, nor ordination would ever safeguard a person from temptations. Temptations will accompany us till our grave, till we breathe our last breath.*

So, let's fortify ourselves with a life of prayer, sacrifice, repentance, almsgiving and service. And Lent is the best time for this.