

One evening a man arrived home carrying a large, sugar-coated coffee cake. His wife asked him “Honey, what happened to your decision to give up sweet things this Lent to lose some weight?”. Man replied,” Honey, what could I do? I prayed to Lord to save me from temptation by not finding a parking spot in front of the bakery. But I found a parking spot, which means that God himself wants me to have this cake.” What he cleverly did not tell his wife was that he found the parking spot in his ninth round to the bakery.

This is one example of how one deals with temptation. I know better than anybody else what it means to be tempted just like this man in the story. Every second of my life I am being tempted to eat sweet things which are forbidden for my health. I know, how I struggle to fight such temptations. This also helps me to fight temptation in the spiritual field as well.

Main theme of today’s readings on this first Sunday of Lent is temptation. When Jesus went into the wilderness he was tested by Satan. In other words, he came face to face with the power that is opposed to the gospel.

He was tempted on three basic human instincts – survival, possession, and recognition.

Survival instinct is very strong in human beings. No one wants to die. In order to fulfill this instinct, people can do anything, good or bad, steal, murder or other evil things. So, the Satan attacks Jesus on this instinct. He has not eaten anything for forty days.

I don't think, anyone of you here know what it feels like to be hungry after fasting for forty days. I have gone without food for 3-4 days as a child as the family had no food, but I also have no experience of going without food for forty days. Jesus was very vulnerable and easy prey for temptation about food. But Jesus comes out victorious on this first temptation. Eve also was tempted on this instinct. By eating this forbidden fruit, “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. Survival instinct.

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.

The Satan tempts Jesus on this instinct. He wants Him to do something spectacular to demonstrate that He is spiritually perfect. 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 Satan tempts Eve on this instinct. “your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods”.

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 Jesus on this instinct and took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the Kingdoms of the world and their splendor. What the tempter offers is the human craving for power, fame and wealth. 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"

These three temptations are common to each and every one of us, not just to Jesus. If Jesus had to face the power that is opposed to the gospel, the same is true of his followers. There are forces outside of us and deep within us that are hostile to the values of the gospel and that work to take us in very different directions to that of the gospel. 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. No one is perfect.

The season of lent gives us an occasion to strengthen ourselves by penance, sacrifice, prayer and alms giving in order to fight the temptation and be victorious.