

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Feb 18th 2024

On the first Sunday of the Lent, we have The forty days of Jesus in the desert and his temptation by Satan.

Jesus is tested in the desert by Satan for forty days. Number forty is significant in the Bible. The first references on this number is the Exodus story where the Israelites had travelled for 40 years through the desert before they entered the land that God had promised. During this journey, most of the people who had started this journey from Egypt died on the way. Hence number 40 is a reference to a life-time rather than just the exact number of days or years. For Jesus, his days in the desert is his own days of Exodus. And this exodus will lead him to Calvary and there he would cross over to the Promised Land of the God's Kingdom. Therefore, as we read and meditate on this gospel passage today, register this message in our hearts: The 40 days are not merely the number 40, rather it refers to the life time of Jesus.

He was tempted by Satan. Satan means everything that obstructs a way, everything that opposes a certain way of life. Satan means the adversary, the one who opposes the way that God wills. Who is this Satan? Satan is indeed the impulse of the flesh that leads to making decisions that oppose the Spirit... that is Satan. It is also the logic of this world that incites you to think of yourself, to disinterest yourself in others, to do what you like. This impulse is 'satan.' Satan are also the institutions that promote immoral behaviors, that finance projects contrary to the good of man; Satan are the organizations that spread drugs, pornography; those who oppose the gospel, who obstruct the way of those who want to follow Christ.

Unlike other synoptic gospels, Mark does not specify what are the temptations. His temptations were neither just three in number and nor did they last just for 40 days. These are our misconceptions. His Temptations continued throughout his time in the desert – till his last breath on Cross. “If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross” – does that ring familiar? If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread ...”

The incarnation of this Satan is Peter... Jesus said to them: you are Satan because you have followed the reasoning of men and you oppose God. All these satans Jesus encountered in his life, he always defeated them. They are the same satans that we too must face and we must identify them well so as not to be led astray.

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