

Homily of First Sunday of Lent, Year A, 2026

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Psalm 51:3-6, 12-13, 17; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

The first reading is the story of the temptation and the fall of Adam and Eve. The gospel reading is about the temptation of Jesus and his triumph over Satan. If Satan tempted Adam and Eve, who lacked nothing, how much more will he tempt you and I who are daily in need? If Satan had the courage to tempt Jesus, who is God, who then, are we, mortal human beings, to escape Satan's temptations?

Someone says, "To be human is to be tempted." St. Ignatius calls Satan "the enemy of our human nature." We all will continue to encounter temptations until our last breath. Satan acknowledged in Job 1:7 that he/she is always "Roaming the earth and patrolling it." That is why the Scripture instructs us, "Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith..." (1 Peter 5:8-9). In today's Divine Office reading, St. Augustine writes, "Our pilgrimage on earth cannot be exempt from trial. We progress by means of trial. No one knows himself except through trial, or receives a crown except after victory, or strives except against an enemy or temptations."

Today, we are presented with the way Adam and Eve handled their temptation and the way Jesus handled his temptations. The two ways can help us understand Satan's deceptions and be prepared.

First, the temptations teach us to listen to God's voice and obey him and not Satan. The eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolizes disobedience to God's command by choosing to listen to Satan. Jesus remained obedient to God throughout his temptations.

Second, the temptations teach us to be oneself. Doing things to impress others land people into trouble. Two times Satan asked Jesus, "If you are the Son of God ..." Prove it! Demonstrate it! Show your power! "Command that these stones to become loaves of bread." "Throw yourself down from the parapet of the temple." Jesus dismissed Satan. Adam and Eve did not dismiss Satan.

Third, the temptations teach us the dangers of inordinate desire of anything. In the case of Adam and Eve, they were no longer content as human beings. Their greed and desire for power and wisdom like gods led to their downfall. Greed goes before fall.

As for Jesus, he was content and in control. He was not swayed by "all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence," Satan showed him. Greed or desire for possession did not gain upper hand of him as was the case with Adam and Eve. In Luke 12:15, Jesus warns us, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possession."

Fourth, the temptations teach us that Satan watches out for our moments of weakness and where we are vulnerable. The temptation of Adam and Eve were in their moments of weakness. Could it be that Satan came to Eve in her moment of weakness of loneliness? There was no word from Adam in the conversation. Was Adam absent and came back hungry and ate the fruit? Later, when God questioned him, he did not claim ignorance of what he ate. He only blamed Eve, "The

woman whom you put here with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it" (Genesis 3:12). In the case of Jesus, the Scripture states clearly that Jesus was "very hungry." So, turning stones into bread would have been a reasonable thing to do to have some bread to eat.

Fifth, the temptations teach us not to give Satan opportunities. Eve gave Satan an opportunity by allowing a rapport with him. The conversation between Satan and Eve shows the rapport which Satan capitalized on. Jesus did not give the devil an opportunity. Jesus was resistant and dismissive of him with God's words. "One does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8:3). "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16). Finally, "Get away, Satan." ... "The Lord, your God, you shall worship and him alone shall you serve" (Deuteronomy 6:13).

St. Paul warns us, "Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33). "Do not give the devil any opportunity to work" (Ephesians 4:27). We are encouraged to avoid people and occasions of sin. St. James says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Let us follow Jesus as we journey through the Lenten season and through our lives' journeys. Hebrews 2:18 encourages us, "Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested." 1 Corinthians 10:13 assures us, "God is faithful, and he will not let us be tempted beyond our ability, but with the temptation he will provide the way of escape, that we may be able to endure it." Amen.

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