

## Homily - 1st Sunday Lent YA

I am going to go out on a limb here and say that our spiritual life and the salvation of souls should have the mentality "Defence wins Championships." Temptations are the biggest battles that we have to fight, the gridiron of our day to day life, and the best way to win these battles is with a strong defence.

We begin by recognizing that none of us are exempt from trial...from temptation. Some might see this as a bad thing and ask why do we have to be tempted...but temptation is not necessarily a bad thing. Its what we do with it...how do we respond to temptation that matters. We can learn a lot about ourselves through the various temptations that we receive. What makes us tick...what are the areas of our lives that the evil one knows is our weakness and how he can exploit it. Recognizing that we are not immune from temptation fosters within us a self-awareness so that we are not caught off guard when the evil one strikes.

The imagery of the first reading which describes the evil one as a serpent gives us an understanding of how the evil one does attack: suddenly with no warning, biting and letting the venom kill. Many of us are probably thinking of our childhood picture bibles which depicts the serpent as a ordinary garden snake. But the word that the sacred author uses describes not a snake but something much more intimidating...fearful...think of a dragon, an alligator, crocodile or cobra. These are beasts that I would normally not want to get close to...but here we have Eve get close to the serpent and enter into dialogue with it. This was the first mistake that she made when she entered into dialogue with the evil one. He is a wordsmith who twists words, creates agendas by lies and deception. He distorts the truth by distorting the source of that truth, God. Eve then goes on to make a decision based on a lie, and there we have the first sin, known as original sin.

Recognizing that we are not immune from temptation allows us to be on guard when the evil one does attack...suddenly and with no warning. When the evil one does attack, being on guard, we defend ourselves by taking cover in our friendship with God through prayer and not entering into dialogue with the evil one.

Adam, by the way, who was charged with guarding the garden was not doing his job and let this all happen by doing nothing and just standing there. St. Paul in his letter makes the comparison between Adam and Jesus. While Adam did nothing, Jesus, the Son of God acts. He goes into the desert and after having prayed and fasted in the desert for 40 days and nights, picks a fight with the evil one. And where does the Lord turn to in each of the temptations whether it be with regards to the flesh, to the eyes or to pride of life but to the Scriptures. Our defence in the time of temptation, after taking cover in prayer, is to turn to Our Lord in the Scriptures... and for this, we need to know the Scriptures. How many times do we pick up our bible and read it...once a week here at Mass...or daily learning about Our Lord as he is revealed to us by the sacred authors. These words are for our salvation... and in them do we find good aspirations to help us get through the gridiron of our day to day life, the little battles of temptation: For example, "Get behind me Satan" or "Perfect love casts out fear".

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What Our Lord did for us in having victory in the desert where he was tempted was to show us that it is possible. We are not meant to be going in circles when it comes to our habitual sins...we can have victory over them...all we need is that strong defence in prayer...in the Scriptures aware that the Lord is fighting for us.

Later in his life, Jesus, the Son of God would himself enter a garden and there do what Adam did not do by standing between the evil one and his bride. He would drink the chalice, follow the Will of God and go to the cross and die to reconcile us to the Father...to bring us back. It is in all the Sacraments where we enter into the mystery of cross, the tree of life - the other tree at the centre of the garden - and receive its fruit, grace, and there find our strongest defence against the evil one. It is in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass where we are nourished by God's grace as we receive Eucharist... food to strengthen us in our day to day battle on our earthly pilgrimage. It is in the confessional where we receive the healing grace that binds up our wounds from the battle and to strengthen us in our fight against sin.

May God bless you in this Lenten season as we take up the fight against sin, with a strong defence so that we can win the imperishable crown of victory in heaven.