

MARCH 1, 2020  
Sunday of the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of Lent  
Matthew 4: 1-11

RESISTING TEMPTATION WITH GOD'S HELP

“Once four priests were spending a couple of days at a cabin. In the evening they decided to tell each other their biggest temptation. The first priest said, ‘Well, it's kind of embarrassing, but my big temptation is bad pictures. Once I even bought a copy of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition. ‘My temptation is worse,’ said the second priest. ‘It's gambling. One Saturday instead of preparing my homily I went to the race track to bet on the ponies.’ ‘Mine is worse still,’ said the third priest. ‘I sometimes can't control the urge to drink. One time I actually broke into the sacramental wine.’ The fourth priest was quiet. ‘Brothers, I hate to say this,’ he said, ‘but my temptation is worst of all. I love to gossip - and if you guys will excuse me, I'd like to make a few phone calls!’”<sup>1</sup>

Everyone of us have temptations. Some of us spend a lot of time in facetime, Facebook, online games, conversing to our friends for many hours through Messenger, browsing a lot through Instagram and watching TV or Netflix while eating our favorite snacks. There are lot of temptations out there and Satan is ready to invites us to be with him. Our gospel for this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent talks about the temptation of Christ. Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil after His fasting of 40 days and 40 nights.

“The number 40 is used throughout the Bible whenever the world is going to experience a major change. There were 40 days of rain in Noah's time when God gave man a new start. Moses went onto Mt. Sinai for 40 days and received God's Law for the people. Elijah traveled for 40 days to that same mountain, in his time called Horeb, and restored the worship of Yahweh. And Jesus spent 40 days in the desert before beginning

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<sup>1</sup> [www.stmaryvalleybloom.org](http://www.stmaryvalleybloom.org)

the proclamation of the Gospel. For us Christians, we spend 40 days of Lent, not just to complete some tasks, not just to give up things. We spend 40 days preparing to transform our lives so that we might be an Easter People.”<sup>2</sup>

We may question why God allows Satan, the devil, the prince of lies tempt us? If you never thought about it, God uses the devil to tempt us because He has a purpose. “At any moment God could banish Satan, but he does not do so. Temptations have a purpose in God's plan. The first reason that God allows the devil to tempt us is to expose our real selves.”<sup>3</sup>

Last year, I tried my best not to eat chocolates from Ash Wednesday until Black Saturday, part of my fasting and also avoiding too much sugar and telling myself to feast on Easter Sunday. One day a friend of mine, gave me a surprise early Easter gift. I opened it in my room and behold a box of my favorite chocolate. I looked at it with inner desire and started thinking about which one I would eat first the first hour of Easter. Well, I was tempted, I shredded off the plastic and ate one. By the end of the day, I had finished the entire box of my favorite chocolate. I will not tell you my favorite chocolate and don't give me this Lent maybe on Easter. My temptation exposed my true self – weak, has a capacity to deceive and be deceived by things that are not essential at that moment. I am vulnerable, fragile and defenseless in times of temptation. When we accept that, it leads us to the virtue of humility.

To be humble is the other purpose of temptation, that is acknowledging our dependence on God. “In response to the devil's temptations, Jesus says that we do not live on bread alone, ‘but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’ Temptation - when we see its true danger - can bring a person to his knees. We can see

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<sup>2</sup> Frjoeshomilies.net

<sup>3</sup> www.stmaryvalleybloom.org

that even in Jesus. He is God in human flesh. As a man, Jesus had to submit his will totally to the will of the Father. When we give in to temptation, when we sin, we go it alone. At first a guy feels like he is freeing himself from restraints, but in fact he is falling into bondage. On the other hand, to resist temptation requires God's help. It takes humility to ask for help, but in the end, it leads to freedom.”<sup>4</sup>

For example, we spend a lot of time in the internet through facetime, browsing and indulging to inappropriate venues. We might think that we are free to do what we want especially when other people don't see us. We spend 3, 4, or 5 hours for this. We become slaves to the temptation and to the devil. But if we recognize that we need to be more productive, spending quality time to our families, or praying and entrusting ourselves to God, we become free. By this, the second purpose of temptation is to depend on God's help and power and trust him.

The third purpose of temptation is when we resist the evil one, his lies and temptation, we are strengthened. Likewise, when we fall into it, we lose strength. Temptation leads to other temptation – we become vulnerable and receptive to it. We become lazy, lustful, sensitive, uncharitable and our spiritual life become dull. But the more we resist the devil, the more we become stronger, we gain strength. We can do all this not by our own power but with God's power and help. Fight temptations and sins with God and don't do it alone. We cannot win alone with Satan, we need God, the most powerful One.

So, my sisters and brothers, accept your weaknesses and be humble, trust and ask strength from the Lord to fight temptation.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.stmaryvalleybloom.org](http://www.stmaryvalleybloom.org)

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, you are my strength and guide. Give me graces that I needed to renounce temptation and live a life of humility, trust and faithfulness to you, my Lord and Master. I can not do it alone I need your mighty power and support. May my Lenten observance of fasting, prayer and almsgiving lead me closer to you and to other people. Amen."