

## Triathalons

A distress call rang in the middle of the night. A woman had climbed up the Golden Gate Bridge (227m) and no one could convince her to come down. So the people turned to a priest from San Francisco. When the priest arrived at the scene with the crowds of people he saw the young woman and began to climb the bridge one step at a time. What the people didn't realize though was that this priest was not just terrified but petrified of heights. As he was climbing up, he was beginning to shake, he began to sweat, he sweat so much that it probably looked like he had a new black shirt!

This woman sees this man terrified out of his wits coming to get her and she begins encouraging him. As he gets closer, she sees that he has a Roman collar. This young woman is so moved that this priest would come up so high even though he didn't know her. When he gets up there, he begins rocking himself. After father slowly calms himself down, his capacity to speak was coming back, he looks in her eyes and then he says: how am I going to get down?

Anyways eventually they both help each other down. Everyone was so impressed and asked the priest: Father what did you say to her?

Although this is an imperfect image, imperfect icon, it is a representation of how Jesus truly enters into our desperate situation to set us free. He who knew no sin but became sin for us would also tremble in our sight with the weight of sin on his shoulders in Gethsemane. He too would begin to sweat tremendously but with great drops of blood. Lent is pointing us toward that direction yet today we get a foreshadowing of that great mystery. It is a foreshadowing of how Jesus will experience temptation not to be overcome by it but to overcome it: have great cheer I have overcome the world!

At the heart of every temptation and sin is a temptation to reject the Father. That is Satan's main goal. But blazing broadsword Jesus will use to overcome the enemy is the mystery of the Father.

When we turn to our Gospel today, we find that this is not clearly evident in the story. Jesus is tempted to turn stones into bread, to receive the kingdoms of the world and to put God to the test. We would see into these temptations representations of the types of temptations we would face: the desire for pleasure, the desire for power and vanity, and the desire for pride. However, I

would suggest that the temptation of the enemy is much more subtle, much more sinister.

It is amazing to think about how a sea lion catches their food. They seem very lazy and it seems impossible for them to catch their tasty prey: the wild sea gulls. But when the time is right, when the sea gulls are flying over the waters, the sea lion will swim underneath the waves and leave its black nose sticking out of the water. The sea lion will begin to twist its body in a circular motion such that the little black nose begins to appear to the seagull like a bug that is swimming around in the waters. Once the sea gull gets close, the sea lion jumps up and snatches its prey.

When Satan draws us in with temptation, he draws us in with something that seems innocent like that black nose, like some bread, but underneath he has deadlier devices. His intention is this: to get us to reject God as Father and to see him as a tyrant. Notice what he says to Jesus: *if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread*. Jesus is not opposed to making bread as we see in his multiplication of the loaves, but he is opposed to what it proves. In other words, Satan is trying to get Jesus to place his identity on something other than what the Father has told him. Instead of receiving his identity from the Father, it is about grasping for his identity from the tyrant and taking it for himself.

The temptation of Jesus begins to sound all too familiar. So familiar in fact that we have to go back to the beginning of time and we hear an echo of the same temptations our first parents experienced. The temptation of Jesus to make bread, to gain all the kingdoms and to test God, to be proud is just a different form of bait that Satan had used in the garden Eden. What did Eve see when she saw the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil? It was good for food, a delight to the eyes and desired to make one wise (Gen 3:6). So Jesus is experiencing the temptation of Adam and Eve again but he experiences to overcome it!

But we need to look closer. The bait that Satan is putting out is not fruit: it is the rejection of God as a loving, providing Father. What did Satan say? Did God really tell you not to eat of the tree? In other words, can you really trust his words? You're not going to die! In fact, when you eat of it you will be like God. God is not a Father. He is holding back from you, he is hiding the good stuff from you so if you really want to get the good stuff in life like pleasure, material things and wisdom, you gotta take it for yourself. This is the Original Sin. Not eating fruit

as such but rejecting the Father letting their trust in their creator die in their heart.

Jesus comes to shatter this misconception, to reveal the mystery of the Father and of his love and consequently the mystery of our identity. He comes to reveal to us a security and source of life that no one can take away. Notice what happens BEFORE Jesus is driven by the Holy Spirit into the desert: he is baptized. When he emerges out of the water he hears the voice his Father saying: You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased. This is key. Jesus KNOWS his identity as the Beloved Son of the Father and so the temptation of Satan becomes much clearer: he is trying to get Jesus to prove his identity, to base his identity in something other than the Father.

But Jesus responds: one does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Jesus is essentially saying: what I do, have or what others think of me does not determine who I am. Satan you do not tell me who I am! My Father tells me who I am! My children, if you could only see how your Father sees you...he sees you as he sees me: you are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter.

Rick was born into a loving family, but unfortunately developed cerebral palsy and would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. However, Rick was able to communicate through a computer and he told his dad, Dick, that he wanted to run in a race and so they did. He was so rejuvenated by this experience and told his dad, "when I'm running it feels like I'm not handicapped." And so it began. With the love of a father burning in his heart, Dick pushed Rick to finish 72 marathons and many other amazing distances.

One of their greatest accomplishments is finishing the triathlon in Hawaii, where Dick had to swim 4 km, bike 180 km, and run 42—all of it with Rick who was being pulled or pushed. There is this beautiful final scene where they are at the last 100 m of this triathlon, thousands upon thousands of people are there at night cheering them on, and the father's love is so strong, sprinting towards the finish line with Rick sitting in the wheelchair moving his arm. And upon crossing the finish line the crowd cheers triumphantly people are weeping because they are witnessing such a miracle of love.

That is the type of father we have. A father who does not neglect us in our brokenness, who calls us to himself, who names us and says, 'you are mine, and I

love you.' And by the power of his grace working within us and our cooperation with it, he is moving us toward heaven, urging us as thousands of angel hosts and all the saints in heaven stand on the sidelines cheering us on as we move towards our heavenly goal where we will hear for all eternity a truth that will issue forth from the mouth of the Father and resound so deeply in our hearts: you are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter, you are mine!