

## **Homily – Lk. 4: 1-13**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent - 06<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 - Sooeey**

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A woman once came to Mahatma Gandhi and asked him to please tell her son to give up his addiction to sugar. Gandhiji asked the woman to bring the boy back in a week. Exactly one week later the woman returned, and Gandhi said to the boy, “Please give up eating sugar.” The woman thanked the Mahatma, and, as she turned to go, she asked him why he had not said those words a week ago.” Gandhi then replied gently, “Because a week ago, I had not given up my habit of eating sugar.”

Well! We are on the First Sunday of Lent. And today, Jesus our Saviour is challenging us and asking us to join Him in order to fight the tempter and his temptations using the power and the means Jesus Himself used.

When we meet Jesus in today’s Gospel, He is at the beginning of His public ministry. It is the beginning of what we might call his campaign to announce the presence of God’s kingdom here on earth. And here, Luke the evangelist would clearly tell us who Jesus is. Now, who is Jesus? The Gospels would say that Jesus is the One who will always do things God’s way. No matter what temptations are thrown across His path, Jesus defines His life by a basic decision and a basic truth, and that is: “I am always going to do things God’s way”.

Satan, remember, is a parasite. Satan exists to tempt us so that we might use our lives and our abilities and our God-given gifts in a way that actually would draw us away from God. And in today's Gospel Reading, Satan, slithers close to the ear of Jesus and says: You are the beloved Son of God, aren't you? Well! If you are the beloved Son, why would God ask His beloved Son, to be hungry? So, stop fasting Jesus. Use your powers, take care of Your needs, turn these stones into bread. But in effect Jesus answers: My belly does not define me and my power does not define me. 'Faithfulness to God the Father'; that defines who I am and what I do. I am the Son of God. That is who I am. And so, I will do things God's way.

Now, having failed at his first attempt of tempting Jesus, the devil doesn't give up. He tempts Jesus a second time. And he says to Jesus: Worship me and I will give you power; worship me and I will give you glory and authority. Worship me and you can define the success of your ministry through all the worldly powers that I can promise you. But Jesus knows who He is. And He knows who His Father is. And He would do things the Father's way.

But Satan doesn't stop. And He even quotes Scripture this time in His attempt to tempt Christ the third time.

But ‘No’, Jesus will not jump off the high tower in Jerusalem just to attract an overly excitable crowd, a crowd attracted by glitz and glitter and miracle shows. Jesus is going to carry out His mission and His ministry on earth the way that God His Father has told Him to with humility and sacrifice, with love and trust. His life is defined by that obedience. And He will live His life the way that God leads.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, men and women whom we know today as the desert fathers and mothers sought solitude in the deserts of Egypt, Judea, and Syria. Their insights into the spiritual life have been handed down to us in the form of brief stories and sayings known in Latin as the *Verba Seniorum*, literally ‘the words of the elders’.

One such brief story is about a brother who came to Sketis to visit Abba Moses. Sketis is in Egypt to the west of the Nile Delta. It’s known today as the *Wadi El Natrun*. The Brother, a fellow monk asked Moses for a Word. That is, a brief teaching.

Moses said to him: “Go and sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything”. The cell referred to here is not a jail cell, but the hermit’s dwelling. Abba Moses was encouraging his brother to sit in his cell silently and patiently, and begin the inner journey.

Well, each year, during these 40 days of Lent, we seek to do as Abba Moses advises his fellow monk, and sit silently as we begin our inner journey. It is a penitential season, a time when we try to come to terms with the meaning of our lives.

Yes! This week the Church has entered into a holy season of preparation, a season of repentance, a season of what we could call Gospel honesty. So let us enter into this season of lent with a sincere desire to look at our life and begin our inner journey: seeking the strength we need to say as Jesus said in the desert: “My life is defined by one thing; I am a child of God, and I will do things God’s way”. But at the same time, in moments of struggles and temptations, let us remember that we have a God who can sympathize with our weakness for He has experienced temptations Himself and He knows how overwhelming temptations can be. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”.

God bless you all, **Amen.**