Tempted Like Christ, But Saved Through Christ

The Gospel reading presents the narrative on the temptation of Christ. This comes after the Baptism of the Lord by John, an event that marks the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, revealing his identity as the Beloved Son of the Father (Mt 3:17). However, the temptation in the desert is a preparation before Jesus could actually begin his public ministry—preaching, healing, feeding the hungry, and other deeds that proclaim the reign of the Kingdom of God.

Lent, which means “spring,” is a season when we, Christians, renew our baptismal commitment to Christ. And something has to “spring” within us, that our life of following the Lord may be renewed. Like trees that are “renewed” during spring season, we should send out sprouts of fresh leaves, a proof of God’s nourishment.

Just as the temptation of Christ was his preparation for his public ministry, Lent season is also our preparation for the Easter. The Gospel reading reminds us that like Jesus Christ who experienced human weaknesses and limitations but sin, we can also experience temptations, and overcome them without sinning.

Enduring the suffering that temptations bring for the glory of God is our “participation” in the Passover of Christ.” We need to acknowledge and overcome our human weaknesses and limitations, so that we may experience the “renewal” that the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord has offered.

The temptations of Christ are the same temptations that we encounter in life. The first two temptations start with the phrase “If you are the Son of God.” This means the devil wants Jesus to prove his divinity. Moreover, in the third temptation, the devil claims that he is God, and not Jesus. In a way, we at time act as if we were gods by following our own will, and not God’s. We ask ourselves: “How do I manifest Jesus Christ in my life? How do I worship him in my prayer and day-to-day life?”

The dialogue between Jesus and the devil offers us significant counteractions against temptations. In the first temptation, the true bread that can satisfy and nourish us is the Word of God. Material things can lure us and deviate our satisfaction, but they do not suffice. But the Word of God is the only bread that satisfies all hunger, because it leads us to eternal life. In the second temptation, the true power is trust in God. Worldly power can eat us to death, without dependence on God. If one does not trust in God, who alone provides everlasting strength and power, he/she is doomed to fail. Only those who trust and have faith in God can move mountains, and only faith in God heals and saves. In the third temptation, unconditional service for others is the true honor, for it leads to holiness. One might gain all earthly honor and be seen as the greatest person on earth, but he/she is seen “nothing” in the eyes of God, for we are all judged by the way we love.

We are, therefore, invited to “journey inward.” The Tagalog word pagbabalik-loob describes it well. By journeying inward, we can be aware of our own selves. We can be more vigilant against temptations. Overcoming temptations should give us more wisdom about life. It should lead us to be more trusting in God’s power. All these should naturally “spring” in us. Let us be assured that we can always be renewed by our Lord. But it also depends on our participation in Christ, for Christ alone can save us.

—Sr. Maria Cecilia M. Payawal, PDDM

Ecumenism Demands a Change of Heart

In promoting ecumenical practice, the Second Vatican Council noted that there can be no authentic ecumenism without sincere conversion and a change of heart. This is true because Christians often fail to live by the truths of their faith. Thus, the Church gives us the season of Lent each year as a time of purification, renewal, and conversion. Recall that at each Mass we begin by asking pardon for our sins and offenses.

Vatican II noted: “All the faithful should remember that the more effort they make to live holier lives according to the Gospel, the better they will further Christian unity and put it into practice. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual brotherly love” (UR 7).

As Catholic Christians, we must get to know and appreciate the faith convictions and outlook of our separated Christian brethren. This demands study and appreciation of the teachings of other Christians, their histories, their spiritual and liturgical life, and even their religious psychology and background. Only with “renewed hearts” will all Christians make progress toward genuine fraternity and unity!
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
[ Cf. Ps 91 (90):15-16 ]
(Recited when there is no opening song.)
When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here.)
P — Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(These [or similar] words may be used to address the assembly.)
P — The first Sunday of Lent is also National Migrants’ Sunday. The passion of Christ continues to be lived in the wounds and pains of migrant Filipinos who suffer from maltreatment of their employers, separation from family, government’s incapacity to fully help in times of need, and threat of death. Bearing their cross and following Jesus, may they be instruments of the Good News and share the joy and victory of Easter.

Penitential Act
P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
(Pause)
P — Have mercy on us, O Lord.
All — For we have sinned against you.
P — Show us, O Lord, your mercy.
All — And grant us your salvation.
P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.
P — Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy
P — Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy
P — Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy
(The Gloria is omitted.)

Collect
P — Let us pray.
(Pause)
Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading (Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7)
(Sit)
Man and woman, created and cared for by God, disobey the Creator and are cut off from him. They then experience disorder and helplessness, as symbolized by their nakedness.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

THE LORD GOD formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.
Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, “Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?” The woman answered the serpent: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.’ But the serpent said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil.” The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 51)
R — Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.
(P. Octobre)

1. Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness/in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense/. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt/ and of my sin cleanse me. (R)

2. For I acknowledge my offense/ and my sin is before me always/ “Against you only have I sinned/, and done what is evil in your sight.” (R)

3. A clean heart create for me, O God/ and a steadfast spirit renew within me./ Cast me not out from your presence,/ and your Holy Spirit take not from me. (R)

4. Give me back the joy of your salvation,/ and a willing spirit sustain in me./ O Lord, open my lips,/ and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. (R)

Second Reading
(Rom 5:12, 17-19)

The gift of salvation brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus is far more powerful than the grip of sin that enslaved humankind.
A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

BROTHERS AND SISTERS:
Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned— for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law.

But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many. And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. For if, by transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Verse before the Gospel
[Mt 4:4b] (Stand)

All — One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

Gospel (Mt 4:1-11)
P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

AT THAT TIME Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.” He said in reply, “It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” Jesus answered him, “Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.” Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.” At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.”

Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God,
that protect the rights and promote the welfare of Filipino overseas workers, we pray. (R)

C — That the families of migrant workers may remain steadfast in the face of temptation, resist the lure of materialism, and strive to stay united in prayer, we pray: (R)

C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause). We pray: (R)

P — Father, hear our prayers and help us to recognize the dignity of each person. Never let us be instruments of exploitation. Rather, let us be bridges that unite people.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts
(Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...

All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — Give us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray, to make these offerings, for with them we celebrate the beginning of this venerable and sacred time.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

Preface: The Temptation of the Lord

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

P — Lift up your hearts.

All — We lift them up to the Lord.

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All — It is right and just.

P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

By abstaining forty long days from earthly food, he consecrated through his fast the pattern of

our Lenten observance and, by overturning all the snares of the ancient serpent, taught us to cast out the leaven of malice, so that, celebrating worthily the Paschal Mystery, we might pass over at last to the eternal paschal feast.

And so, with the company of Angels and Saints, we sing the hymn of your praise, as without end we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy... (Kneel)

Acclimation
(Stand)

All — When we eat...

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom...

Invocation to Peace

Invocation to Communion
(Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Mt 4:4)

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Renewed now with heavenly bread, by which faith is nourished, hope increased, and charity strengthened, we pray, O Lord, that we may learn to hunger for Christ, the true and living Bread, and strive to live by every word which proceeds from your mouth.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)

May bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray, come down upon your people, that hope may grow in tribulation, virtue be strengthened in temptation, and eternal redemption be assured.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go in peace.

All — Thanks be to God.