

## **Homily 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent**

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

It is a test. My heart always sank at School when the teachers suddenly announced, 'Put your books away, you're going to get a test today'. To be examined on what you have learned, on what you know and expose what you don't know. Measure for measure we spend much of our lives being tested, not just exams and driving test, but also 'means testing', IQ tests, medical tests, and now Covid PCR tests and Flow tests. To see whether we pass or fail, to see if we are positive or negative, to check if we are to be trusted or not; to see if we pass or fail.

In the Gospel today, Jesus, the Son of God, allows himself to be tested by the devil during 40 days in the wilderness. This is firstly a consequence of God becoming flesh and assuming a human state. – reminding us that being human is a testing experience; secondly that because he is God, that any power or dominion that is not Godly will see him as a challenge or threat to their power and seek to break His spirit; to take Him under their rule.

Thirdly, this testing experience sets the tone for Jesus' mission on earth to set us free from the power of sin, from the culture of giving into temptation and turning away from God. Jesus is saying to us, 'If you stay with me and follow my example, then you won't go far wrong. – You will be tested but found worthy. It is not a bad thing, in itself, to be tempted, temptation is a challenge to our conscience, our reason and presents opportunities to make the right choices, in a sense, using our capacity to prove to ourselves and to God, that we can fend for ourselves in the moral maze of human existence. – To be tempted and not give into temptation makes us stronger.

In the Confessions of St Augustine, he wrestles with the temptations of accepting or rejecting the presence of God in his life, crying out in relief as he is rescued from giving into sin, 'O God, of power, convert us to you; show us your face and we shall be safe'.

To protect ourselves from evil this world, we should make a conscious effort to seek the help of Christ, so that we don't do something stupid and sinful; then be riddled with remorse and guilt.

Someone who is not Christ like is not concerned about the consequences of their sinful acts. They are tempted to treat other people as 'pawns' for their own advantage, and to objectify others for their own selfish pleasure.

St John Paul II, wrote an encyclical about the Sacrament of confession about 40 years ago, 'Reconciliation and Penance', *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, and the consequences of human beings giving into temptation and carrying out terrible evil acts. He states, "sin is an integral part of the truth about humanity, men and woman, can, and do, commit evil acts, and those acts open up a double wound; in the sinner's relationship with family, friends and neighbours and with God. If we take temptation seriously, then we take sin seriously, and therefore the sense of sin being real can never be diminished. So, in the desert today, Jesus is left in no illusions, that his primary mission on earth is to overcome evil in the world by his own Divine power. His Godliness is stronger than any temptation laid in his path; even when he is starving and weak.

If world leaders, who are all human, vain and vulnerable to temptation could only, look to Christ and his Cross, then the battle against moral evil can be won. Lent is a time to take a careful, spiritual look at ourselves and realise how weak we all are in the sight of God – the ultimate destiny of giving into temptation is suffering and death.

The antidote to this is the Cross of Christ; Jesus starts his mission on earth by suffering hunger in the desert; he ends his mission with suffering on the cross. However, the Cross of Sacrifice becomes by his resurrection, the cross of triumph over sin and death. – This brings a revelation to humanity that the cross of Christ, its vertical beam signifies our reconciliation with God; the horizontal beam, our reconciliation with humanity.

God bless you all,

Canon Jeremy Bath