

Growing up I never understood the temptations of Christ. I would wonder what would be so bad about turning a stone into bread. After all if I were hungry and I could turn stones into bread I would do it in a second. How could Jesus be tempted into worshipping the devil, for he already had all power and glory? Finally, how is jumping off the parapet of the temple attractive in the least.

Whenever we encounter something in scripture that puzzles us it is best to take the mystery to prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us. That revelation can happen quickly or over time. When we do this we come to the conclusion that God does things pretty differently than I. If we think further about this we are amazed when we discover how far God's wisdom is beyond our created intellect.

So at this moment Jesus is faced with a very human need. To say he is hungry is quite the understatement. We know that elsewhere in scripture Jesus takes pity on a hungry crowd and can feed them with five loaves and two fish. The difference is in the multiplication of loaves Jesus spent time in private, praying to God the Father to know his will. In this case it is the devil telling Jesus to satisfy his own need. This temptation is at the onset of Jesus' public ministry, the sole purpose of which is to reconcile all of humanity with God through the series of events that we call the Paschal Mystery, his death and resurrection, the events we celebrate at the Easter Triduum. We know that Jesus can miraculously provide food for the entire world, but that would not reconcile all humans with God. We can probably think of examples of people who have been helped but were ungrateful and the charity extended to them only satisfied an immediate need. Instead we can say with Jesus, God became hungry. When anyone is hungry Jesus himself is hungry. Jesus takes all of our problems nails them to the cross and brings new life out of them.

Likewise Jesus does not reign over the world in earthly power as the devil tempts him with, nor does he fling himself from the temple to show that he indeed has power over angels and gravity to protect him from a fall. These temptations are much like the ones at the cross where those passing by said **"if you**

are the Son of God, (and) come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40). Instead Jesus reigns in humility, in great love and compassion, and by bearing all of our burdens and hardships.

In our preface before the Eucharistic prayer we will hear that **“By rejecting the devil’s temptations [Jesus] has taught us to rid ourselves of the hidden corruption of evil, and so to share his paschal meal in purity of heart.”** Lent is a time for us to examine ourselves and ask how are we doing in the face of our temptations. In all of our problems are we doing things God’s way? Do we follow what we know Jesus teaches us through his Church? Do we know what the Church teaches or in some way do we do what we think is best avoiding the cross and thereby avoiding the resurrection?

We are beginning to discuss our next principle in gracious living, sharing. The heart of sharing is that Jesus shared everything with us. We know that he shared our very nature and our weaknesses even being tested similarly in every way, yet never succumbing to sin (Heb. 4:15). Likewise Jesus shares his victory over temptation, sin, and death, and that is the highpoint we are progressing to which we will celebrate at the Easter Triduum. Because our Savior shares everything, we the Body of Christ share our gifts, our talents, and even our frustrations and weaknesses so that they may be transformed by Christ our Head.

~~This morning as we consider the goal of Lent, which is Easter we consider our temptations and we realize that through our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving we learn to not give in to temptation but to follow the will of God. In Lent am I sharing by using my prayer to intercede for the needs of the community of Our Lady of Sorrows, and am I sharing through my fasting because what I forgo leads me to be generous in giving to those in need especially in our community? As we begin Lent we are with Jesus in the desert...~~