

The First Sunday of Lent/Year A -
4/5 February 2017 -
11:00 AM Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion for
Candidates -
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community - HOMILY

1st Reading:

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

- "The Lord God formed the man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. The Lord God planted a Garden in Eden, . . . made various trees grow . . . 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 . . . The serpent asked the woman . . . " **remember, the serpent was cunning . . . told only part of the story . . .** "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." . . . "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; . . . "

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 51 – *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Romans 5:12-19

- "Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned – For if, by the transgression of one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and 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.**"

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GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 4:1-11

- "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. . . . If you are the Son of God, It is written If you are the Son of God, . . . it is written if you will prostrate yourself and worship me . . . It is written"

i. Without fail, each year on this First Sunday of Lent, we hear of Jesus, **following his baptism in the Jordan by his cousin, John the Baptist**, being led into the desert . . . to be tempted, tested by the Devil . . . at least in the Gospels of Mark . . . the shortest version . . . Matthew and Luke.

It should strike us all as something particularly strange since, after all, with the above three (3) Evangelists each sharing their inspired version of the baptism that immediately precedes this . . . we hear things like the sky opening up . . . the Spirit . . . like a dove . . . descending on Jesus . . . and a voice out of nowhere that says, “This is my beloved Son . . . a Son who is found with favor . . . listen to him.” . . . but now . . . that same “Spirit that descended” is at work **leading Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil!** Does that not strike you as **more** than strange?

Remember also that further on in the Gospels . . . in Matthew, flowing from the Gospel we heard proclaimed on Ash Wednesday, and in Luke’s version, responding to the Disciples request to Jesus to: “Teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples” . . . the very prayer we pray each time we gather for

Eucharist . . . the very prayer we will pray shortly in which we petition the Lord to **“not lead us into temptation but deliver us from all evil”** . . . should cause us to wonder just **what** is happening here? **What** is God doing? **What** are we to think?

ii. Consider this for a moment.

If any of us were to wake in the morning and feel feverish and achy and perhaps even sick to our stomach and then some . . . most likely . . . we would contact our doctor to get checked out . . . we would want to know what we are dealing with . . . we recognize we just are not feeling well, and so, we take the steps we need to check it out . . . steps to, hopefully, recover . . . and get back to feeling better . . .

In some ways . . . that’s not unlike experiencing being “tempted” . . . “When we are tempted, we realize that we are weak.” When our health, or even other aspects of our lives, “are going along without any problems” or challenges, “when we move from one success to another, it is easy for us to imagine that it is our own strength” . . . perhaps, “even our own abilities that” are at play . . . Just continue to do

whatever it is we are doing . . . and we will be healthy
just continue to do whatever we are doing . . . and we
will be “guaranteed a successful life.”

But, when we “wake up feeling sick” . . . or more
to the point of the Gospel . . . “when we experience
temptation, we have to admit that our abilities and
strength are limited.” Our feeling sick may not just
disappear without some sort of medical intervention . .
. . with “a change in certain circumstances or a bad
decision on our part” . . . life can change dramatically
and quickly . . . and whatever we felt was successful,
“could all be undone.”

“So temptation shows us the fragility of life. It
reminds us that a successful life is not just the results
of our own efforts but depends greatly on God’s
grace. Temptation shows our weakness” and invites
us to **lean even more deeply . . . on God** and to
trust, **even** more deeply . . . “in God’s help. . . .”

iii. There is a “second good”, if you will, . . . that can
come from temptation . . . and that is, “temptation
gives us a direction. The areas in which we are
tempted are the surest sign of what actions are
required in our life. For example, if we find ourselves
being angry or disappointed with “another person” . . .

“if we are tempted to be unfaithful” in a relationship, that temptation is telling us” that that anger . . . that disappointment . . . that relationship “needs attention. Temptation lets us know clearly what in our lives needs to be addressed and resolved . . . not only does it give us direction . . . but offers us, with God’s grace and help once again, a path to healing . . . to resolution.

“We [may] find ourselves tempted to be self-indulgent, to do very little, to eat too much, to cater to our own desires” . . . “temptation is telling us that there is too much **taking** in our life and not enough **giving.**”

As one Homilist wrote, “Lent becomes a time to get out of the potato chip bag, away from the television set, and choose some action of service that will help someone else.”

Perhaps, there remains an unresolved anger or feeling of vengeance toward someone who has hurt us . . . “temptation is telling us that we are wounded, and becomes that red flag that calls to us and reminds us of our need to “open ourselves to healing

and forgiveness, because it is only through [healing] and forgiveness that we can become free.”

“This Lenten season is a time in which we ask ourselves, “Where am I tested in life? Where am I tempted,” . . . and then . . . **then . . . lean more deeply on God . . . trust more deeply in God . . .** who wants nothing more than to lead us through the desert and welcome us into that oasis of grace and new life that awaits us . . . Yes . . . take time to honestly claim where you may be tested in life . . . where you may be tempted . . . and then, “allow those temptations to give you direction on what actions you are being called to undertake . . . not just during these 40 days . . . but beyond . . .

“And if,” through the desert, “you discover that things are more difficult than you thought . . . particular issues in a relationship are more of a challenge than you realized . . . that it is not easy to serve . . . not easy to forgive . . . do not be discouraged. Remember: “temptation also tells us that we are weak, [and recognizing our weakness], assures us that we are not alone . . . motivating us and inviting “us to trust more deeply in God’s grace . . . God’s help.