

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: YEAR C

To help us deepen our conversion and recommit ourselves to living out our baptismal promises in this season of Lent, today the Church invites us to look at how Jesus overcame the devil when the devil tempted him.

Everybody knows about temptation, because it is constant companion through life.

The common temptation the Church as a whole faces and we as individuals face is simply to allow ourselves to be distracted from what the Lord has done for us and our mission in life and take the easy way out.

In the first reading, Moses reminds the people of Israel what the Lord has done for them; the many blessings and favors that they have received from him.

On their part he encourages them not to forget the Lord. This they must do by offering the first fruits of their produce to the Lord. Moses wants them to show gratitude to God. In this way, they will always maintain their relationship as people who are in covenant with the Lord.

In the Gospel, we hear the temptation of Jesus by the devil.

The temptation story summarizes different moments in the life of Jesus, when he was tempted by the devil to forget about his mission to die on the cross to save us and to take the easy way out.

The devil being so clever uses the normal human desires to try to win over Jesus: physical gratification (food), power, glory and relationship.

In the first round of the temptation the devil suggests that Jesus should never have an unsatisfied appetite. Jesus' response does not deny human hungers but it informs us that there are things in life that are even more important than bread. In the second round the devil turns to power and glory. He offers Jesus the control over everything if Jesus worships him. Jesus' reply shows that he believes in an entirely different sort of power and that he will dedicate himself to nothing and no other than God.

In the third round devil's suggestion is that Jesus should attempt to manipulate God by forcing God into action. Jesus' response is that God expresses love on divine terms not according to human agendas.

The choice that Jesus faces is being selfish or selfless. He chooses in all these instances to remain selfless, seeking to carry out his mission according to God's ways but not his.

We also face temptations to selfishness, power and manipulating God. The devil offers us cheap, attractive and corrupt ways to fulfill our real needs for sustenance, self-expression and genuine relationship with God and others. The point is the devil tries many times to distract us from our mission. He disturbs and even destroys our relationship with God. Today, the Church invites us to remain faithful to God in the moments of our temptations.

The devil also tempts the Church to forget its core mission to make disciples; to lead people to have intimate relationship with Christ and to grow in him.

We should remember that all the activities of the Church: liturgical, spiritual and social are to be focused on making disciples for Christ.

As the Bishop wrote to us in his letter about 2019 Annual Diocesan Appeal, a common thread of support for the mission/ the good works of the Church in Richmond Diocese is the annual appeal. The Diocese depends on our generous contributions to fund its missionary activities.

Our support of the appeal makes us become part, in a special way, of the great team of the Diocese which is helping it to live out its core mission to make disciples.