



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

ANGELUS

St Peter's Square

First Sunday of Lent, 21 February 2010

(Video)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last Wednesday, with the penitential Rite of Ashes we began Lent, a Season of spiritual renewal in preparation for the annual celebration of Easter. But what does it mean to begin the Lenten journey? The Gospel for this First Sunday of Lent illustrates it for us with the account of the temptations of Jesus in the desert. The Evangelist St Luke recounts that after receiving Baptism from John, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil" (Lk 4: 1). There is a clear insistence on the fact that the temptations were not just an incident on the way but rather the consequence of Jesus' decision to carry out the mission entrusted to him by the Father to live to the very end his reality as the beloved Son who trusts totally in him. Christ came into the world to set us free from sin and from the ambiguous fascination of planning our life leaving God out. He did not do so with loud proclamations but rather by fighting the Tempter himself, until the Cross. This example applies to everyone: the world is improved by starting with oneself, changing, with God's grace, everything in one's life that is not going well.

The first of the three temptations to which Satan subjects Jesus originates in hunger, that is, in material need: "If you are the Son of God command this stone to become bread". But Jesus responds with Sacred Scripture: "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Lk 4: 3-4; cf. Dt 8: 3). Then the Devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth and says: all this will be yours if, prostrating yourself, you worship me. This is the deception of power, and an attempt which Jesus was to

unmask and reject: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" (cf. Lk 4: 5-8; Dt 6: 13). Not adoration of power, but only of God, of truth and love. Lastly, the Tempter suggests to Jesus that he work a spectacular miracle: that he throw himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple and let the angels save him so that everyone might believe in him. However, Jesus answers that God must never be put to the test (cf. Dt 6: 16). We cannot "do an experiment" in which God has to respond and show that he is God: we must believe in him! We should not make God "the substance" of "our experiment". Still referring to Sacred Scripture, Jesus puts the only authentic criterion obedience, conformity to God's will, which is the foundation of our existence before human criteria. This is also a fundamental teaching for us: if we carry God's word in our minds and hearts, if it enters our lives, if we trust in God, we can reject every kind of deception by the Tempter. Furthermore, Christ's image as the new Adam emerges clearly from this account. He is the Son of God, humble and obedient to the Father, unlike Adam and Eve who in the Garden of Eden succumbed to the seduction of the evil spirit, of being immortal without God.

Lent is like a long "retreat" in which to re-enter oneself and listen to God's voice in order to overcome the temptations of the Evil One and to find the truth of our existence. It is a time, we may say, of spiritual "training" in order to live alongside Jesus not with pride and presumption but rather by using the weapons of faith: namely prayer, listening to the Word of God and penance. In this way we shall succeed in celebrating Easter in truth, ready to renew our baptismal promises. May the Virgin Mary help us so that, guided by the Holy Spirit, we may live joyfully and fruitfully this Season of grace. May she intercede in particular for me and for my collaborators of the Roman Curia, who begin the Spiritual Exercises this evening.

After the Angelus:

I offer a warm greeting to all the English-speaking visitors present for this *Angelus* prayer, especially the boys and girls of the London Oratory Junior Choir. In today's Gospel the Church invites us to contemplate Christ's victory over temptation and to imitate his complete obedience to the Father's will. May the Lenten Season which we have now begun draw us closer to the Lord in prayer and prepare us to celebrate worthily his victory over sin and death at Easter. Upon all of you I invoke God's abundant Blessings!

I wish you all a peaceful Sunday and a good Lenten journey.