

## TEMPTATION

Sometimes parishioners will ask me if I believe in the Devil. My answer is always the same. I do NOT believe in the Devil. I DO believe in Jesus Christ. However, while not believing IN the Devil. I most certainly DO believe that the Devil exists and is a fallen angel and prowls this earth seeking to destroy souls. I really do believe that. Even in this high tech, twenty-first century age of Smartphones and tablets and iPads. No pitchfork and horns and tail but every bit a sly and cunning spiritual presence that seeks to undermine and then destroy anyone and anything that is good.

My answer always elicits a follow up. Why would an angel or an archangel do that or become that? Which leads me to: Just what do you think the Devil's sin was? The evil one is referred to as Satan or the Devil or Lucifer (which means the one who bears the light, like Christopher means the one who bears Christ). What do I think Satan's sin was? I think that Lucifer believed that God held something back in creating him. Lucifer therefore did not trust God because Lucifer thinks that God doesn't trust his creatures especially Lucifer. Lucifer doesn't believe that God really wants to give us everything and or wants what is best for us. God is not trustworthy. God's word is thus not believable. And therefore, God must be destroyed. The sin of Satan. And Satan sows that same mistrust, that same misunderstanding of God, those same lies to everyone and anyone who will listen—anywhere in the world. The evil one does not want you or me or anyone to cooperate with God or love like God or be good like God or beautiful like God or holy like God. That's a hard truth but that is the truth. The evil one always wants to tear down. And will slow play and underplay until he gets the upper hand. Then the evil one shows his destructive designs when it is too late. When the addiction or compulsion has taken hold, or when the self-defeating mindset has taken hold in me.

Our human sin mirrors Satan's sin. Our first parents did not trust God either, did not put their faith in the word that God spoke to them. That is why our own trusting is such a difficult thing. So what did our first parents do? They reached out and took what was delightful to their senses to nourish themselves with even though it had not been given to them. And what happened? Their eyes were opened like Satan said. But they were immediately filled with fear and shame. They lost their friendship with the God who gave them life. Instead of becoming masters of what was right and wrong they were thrown into confusion. Immediately they began to blame each other. They were not at all like God. The result of sin was that their own trusting relationship with each other was torn. Their trusting relationship with God was sundered. And it began to spread to their children who did not trust each other and then one actually turned violent toward his own sibling. Their sin: taking what had not been given to them by God.

Every sin you commit or I commit has a "taking" component to it. Whether it is lust and the taking of sexual pleasure on our terms and not the Lord's; or envy, the seeking to take another's goodness from them to have as our own; or sloth which seeks to take advantage of other's labor to get out from under legitimate and important responsibilities by taking the easy way out; or anger which seeks to take control of another's life and force them to submit; or gluttony which takes more than is needed to satisfy personal appetites and thus deprive others; or pride which seeks to take personal

credit for that which is God's work; or greed which seeks to take more than my own fair share of this world's resources regardless of the needs of others.

So, where does Jesus fit into this picture? He was tempted. He was tempted by the evil one. A temptation is a possibility. A choice. If we make a bad choice or choose poorly and selfishly then we unleash more of the destructive power of sin in our world. If we choose wisely and choose to cooperate with the grace of God, with God's way of seeing things and doing things, then the transforming power of the grace of Jesus Christ is further unleashed on this world. Jesus trusts his Father and obeys his Father and lives in accordance with the Father's will. Doing this unleashes on this world—harmony, goodness, unity, beauty and truth. My friends, do you know why we sin? Because we can. Because we want to. Do you know why we live the way of Christ? Because we can. Because we want to. It is the same. Our call. Our choice. Lent has come. Let us pray to our Eucharistic Lord that in the moment when the evil one is testing us that we have the grace to choose to live following Christ and living his way. Embracing all that brings with us.