

Temptation

This coming Sunday is the first Sunday in Lent. The gospel reading is Mark 1:9-15. In verses 9-11 we have the narrative of Jesus' baptism. Here the Father declares that Jesus is His Son as the Spirit descends on Jesus.

Jesus' status as God's Son makes Him a target of Satan's assaults. This same dynamic continues in the lives of God's children today, as Satan does all that he can to tempt the baptized. Yet, our own Baptism joins us to Christ and clothes us with His righteousness.

In verses 12-13 we see Jesus' successful struggle against temptation in the wilderness prefigure His final victory at the cross over our ancient foe. Immediately after being revealed as God's Son, Jesus' archenemy, Satan, begins to assault Him. Jesus emerges from His time of testing perfectly, without succumbing to temptation in any way. He thus achieves something greater than all those tempted before Him and foreshadows the climax of the Gospel. There, He will undergo greater temptation but will rise victorious over the grave.

From the days of Adam and Eve, people have continuously fallen into Satan's traps. Jesus, after uniting himself with fallen humans through Baptism, won a preliminary victory over the evil foe's temptations. At the cross, Jesus gained an even more wonderful victory for us. His resurrection proves that Satan cannot prevail.

Satan means "The Adversary" and was an OT expression which meant "the one who lies in ambush for." He is a spiritual force whom we cannot defeat on our own. He is not only powerful but also relentless. The narrative of Jesus' temptation from Luke ends with these words: "*when devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*" The devil is very persistent and devious one who attempts to lure us into sin.

BUT, we have weapons too. In our baptism God put his mark on us to show that we are his. The Word of God is the sole instrument which we can use in our constant fight with Satan. That's what Jesus used in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. In the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and especially verse three we hear this comforting phrase concerning the devil: "He's judged; the deed is done; One little Word can fell him." That word is Jesus.

It is said that: "*angels attended him.*" The Lord also supplies us with 24/7 attendance of angels who serve as our guardians.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for defeating the devil's temptations. Thank you for giving us the means to resist Satan's enticements through your Word and Sacraments. Help us to use this Lenten season to repent of our many actions that caused Christ to suffer and die. Help us to be on the alert to the lures that come from the devil and how he uses the world and our sinful flesh. Help us to daily put on the whole armor of God. Amen