

There is a beautiful legend about a thorn bird. It is said that the thorn bird sings only once in its lifetime. Leaving its nest, it searches for a bush, a bush with long and sharp thorns. On finding such a thorny bush, the thorn bird pierces itself on the biggest thorn. It is at that point that it begins to sing. And this sweet and beautiful singing outmatches the lark or the nightingale or any other singing bird. The world pauses in silence and wonder, as they hear the melodious voice from the wounded and dying bird. The legend clearly gives us the message: that the most satisfying moments of life can be purchased only for the price of great pain.

Lent is a time of penance and prayer—a time when we will turn our hearts back to God. We pray more deeply. We give up things. We fast and we offer alms. All of this, we hope, will focus our hearts and souls, drawing us closer to God, improving his image in us and preparing us for the great feast of Easter.

On this first Sunday of Lent, we hear about the temptation of Jesus in the desert. After forty days of prayer and fasting, he is very hungry. At his moment of physical weakness, the devil approaches him to test him. He does not get into argumentation with devil but quotes the bible and chases him away. He defeated the devil, because he was filled with the Holy Spirit at Baptism in Jordan, soon before being led to the desert, and was aligned with the will of his Father.

Temptations do come to all of us also in our lives; – in various disguise of course. They are part of our life. They come in a pleasing way. *Temptation is a trick, a deception, a lie.* It conceals the truth and presents falsehood to us as the truth. A temptation may apparently offer us something good but entices us to use it in a false and selfish way. No wonder that temptations come from the devil, which is called the father of lies.

The three temptations of Jesus are the three essential weapons that the devil has in his arsenal to destroy humanity:

*These three temptations-of pleasure, pride and power- are our temptations also, and to them, somehow, are perhaps connected all other temptations. The devil invites us to turn towards self, while Jesus invites us to turn towards God. In each of the three tests today, Jesus is being led on to do what would enhance his mission as Lord and Savior.*

We know what sin is. Sometimes, we deliberately choose what we know is wrong. But other times, it feels like we have been tricked to sin. How does the devil try to trick us? By setting you up with facts to make us fall for a lie. We see this in Jesus' temptation in the desert.

The devil mentions Jesus as son of God, true. Devil quotes scripture saying God will protect Jesus, true. Then the devil tells Jesus to throw himself from the top of the temple. And that is the lie. It is the same with us. For example, the devil might tell you: you are treated unfairly, true. You deserve justice, true. Now, take revenge, lie. The facts the devil told us become the excuses we use to justify sinning. We must remember this during Lent. If we know the tactics of the enemy, we can be much stronger and better prepared in resisting temptation.

Friends, let us approach Lent, not with fear or trepidation, but rather with joy. Let us rejoice in our gracious God, who desires not the destruction of the sinner, but his/her redemption. Let us begin this Holy Season of Lent with a penitential frame of mind, seeking out disruptions in our lives and replacing these things with a constant dependence on God and His grace. Have a Blessed Lent.