

## Homily - 1st Sunday of Lent, March 5, 2022

Looking back, I have almost exclusively preached on Christ's temptations on this First Sunday of Lent. That is not surprising. Our Lord goes into the desert and fasts for forty days. He encounters temptations. It is while Jesus is weakened and hungry that Satan battles Him. There is much here to reflect upon in our lives, and especially as we have begun our forty-plus days of fasting and praying and almsgiving.

Today, I want to, at least briefly, survey the other Scripture passages that we are given this year.

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Our First Reading is from the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses is instructing the Israelites. When they finally settle in the Promised Land and the harvest comes in, they were to take the first fruits and offer them to the Lord. And then they were to make merry.

“Therefore, I have now brought you the firstfruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence.”

The Firstfruits. This image was a reminder that everything they had was from God, who had brought them this far and was the source of all blessings. The Firstfruits – which seem quite enticing while waiting for the season of the harvest. When the first of the harvest is brought in, it is not devoured by the people. A bit of self-restraint is taken. A short fast, if you will, from the delights that have come forth from the earth. God's people give away the first portion as part of their worship to God. Then, the rest of the food is for their feasting.

Jesus is the Firstfruits. Specifically, in the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians [15:20-23], Our Lord is called the Firstfruits of the Resurrection. But we can see in this image the pattern of our ongoing relationship with Christ.

He is the Eternal Only Begotten Son. Through Him we become sons and daughters of the Father. He has come both to save us and to be an example to us. He is the best and first that is offered on the Sacrifice of the Cross. He takes our

**humble offering of bread and wine and transforms it into His very self to be offered to the Father in the Eucharist.**

**Here, at the beginning of Lent, in the first days especially, we pay attention to these firstfruits of our prayer and fasting and almsgiving. And often we sense a firstfruits of blessings already stirring in our souls through our Lenten efforts.**

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**Our Responsorial is from Psalm Ninety-One [Salmo 90].**

**This Psalm is not used as often in Mass as some others, such as Psalm twenty-three. But it has inspired many hymns. [(In English) And in English, one of those Hymns has become very popular and a standard that is requested – “On Eagle’s Wings.”]**

**This Psalm was obviously known enough by the Israelites of the time that the Devil in today’s gospel passage tried to use it against Jesus. He used it as a scriptural reason to steer in a different direction from the divine plan. The line used, is:**

**“For to his angels he has given command about you, that they guard you in all your ways. Upon their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”**

**The angels do indeed serve Christ, and God has given us each a Guardian Angel. This is a comfort and an encouragement in times of trouble. And it also is a truth that lightens our hearts. But as our Lord Himself attested, it is not to be a source of pride or selfish power.**

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**Our Second Reading seems to echo the theme of our Responsorial Psalm. The Old Testament Hymn sings of the protection one receives from God the Almighty. And This New Testament passage gives a wonderful proclamation of our safety in believing in Christ. In the context of the letter, it is an assertion that our relationship with God is in Christ whether we are Jewish or Greek. In the context of this weekend, we know that in the middle of all the turmoil and temptation we experience, no one who believes in Christ is left alone.**

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**Christ is our firstfruits. Christ is our example of how to deal with temptation. Faith in Christ is our hope. The Desert of Lent is where we find Jesus – loving us and teaching us how to follow Him in grace and life.**