

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily  
Sunday, March 9, 2025  
First Sunday of Lent  
Cycle C

As we begin the season of Lent, today's gospel reading takes us into the desert where Jesus himself faces temptation. And these are not just random temptations. They are the very same illusions we all face in life. The devil is basically whispering: "Take the shortcut. Why struggle when you can have it all now?"

First Temptation: "Turn these stones into bread." At first glance, it sounds good, right? After all, bread is a basic need. And imagine if Jesus could end world hunger instantly! But Jesus knew better. He responds, "One does not live on bread alone. You see, physical hunger is only one kind of hunger. There are people starving for attention and affection, starving for purpose and meaning, starving for someone to see them, to listen to them, to care. Our world is full of empty stomachs, yes – but it is also full of empty hearts. Think of those who are experiencing emotional, relational, and spiritual hungers. Feeding them only with bread will not fill the hunger of the soul. We are called to feed the whole person – with food, yes, but also with compassion, understanding, and presence.

Second Temptation: "All this power and glory I will give you." Again, sounds tempting! Think of what Jesus could do if he ruled the nations! But

Jesus knew that true greatness does not come from power or prestige. He says, “You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.” So many today are chasing “the illusion of more” – more money, more likes, more influence. But the heart was not designed for ‘more.’ It was designed for God. We give him leftovers of our time, our attention, our prayers, and then we wonder why we feel empty. But Lent is here to remind us: if God is not first, everything else will fall apart.

Third Temptation: “Throw yourself down. God will catch you.” This one’s tricky. The devil even quotes Scripture. But Jesus does not play that game. Why? Because God’s love is not proven by magic tricks. It is proven on the Cross. The mission of Jesus was not about impressing people. It was about transforming hearts. And the same goes for us. We do not win people back to God by being showy or superior. We win them by loving them, by welcoming back the ones who feel unworthy to enter a church. By saying with our actions, “You belong here. God has not given up on you.”

My dear friends, Lent is not about finding shortcuts to holiness. It is about facing the illusions head-on.

- The illusion that bread alone can satisfy.
- The illusion that power will fulfill us.
- The illusion that faith means no effort, no sacrifice, no risk.

The devil loves shortcuts. But Jesus shows us a better way. The harder way. The true way.

As we journey together, as Pilgrims of Hope, remember: Jesus did not take the easy way out. He took the Cross. And because of that, he walks with us every step of the way.

No shortcuts. No illusions. Just love. And that, my dear friends, changes everything.