

LENT SUNDAY I "C"
MARCH 9/10, 2019

In December 2017 Pope Francis stated that the English wording of the Our Father prayer should be changed because it implies that God "induces temptation." As we know, the close of the Lord's Prayer asks God to "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The Holy Father told an Italian broadcaster that the wording should be changed to reflect that it was not God who led humans into sin. The issue is not the prayer, but an inaccurate translation. Pope Francis stated: "It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation. I am the one who falls. It's not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen. A father doesn't do that. A father helps you get up immediately. It's Satan who leads us into temptation. That's his department." Pope Francis highlighted the French translation of the "Our Father", which uses the phrase "do not let us fall into temptation" instead. The English version we have traditionally used was translated from Latin, which was in turn, translated from ancient Greek, which was then translated from Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus.

So what has all this to do with us as we begin another Lenten season?

The Gospel scene of Jesus' triple temptation in the desert according to St. Luke ends with this comment: "When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Jesus for a time" (Lk. 4:13). Unique to St. Luke's Gospel I find this verse particularly consoling.

The author of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews in naming Jesus the "Great High Priest" says of him: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been similarly tested in every way, yet without sin" (Hb. 4:15). Too often we concentrate on the last two words "without sin" and ignore what goes before to emphasize Jesus' divine nature and his otherness from us. Yes, in his divine nature Jesus was without sin, sin and divinity are mutually exclusive realities. However, we do violence to the person and work of Jesus to overlook or downplay the fullness of the human nature he shares with us. The end of today's Gospel and this verse from the letter to the Hebrews are a great consolation as we enter into Lent and confront our own temptations, struggles to overcome our sinful habits, set out on the road to conversion with the hope of rising to still deeper faith and

Christian discipleship at Easter. These verses console us that we are not alone, that in Jesus God is close to us. God is with us in our struggle. God will not abandon us.

The three temptations Jesus confronts today, and which if we take St. Luke's statement at the end of the Gospel scene seriously—temptations to **materialism**: *to live solely to satisfy our physical desires*; **idolatry**: *fashioning for us a god out of politics, power and authority*; **divinity**: *claiming divine prerogatives for ourselves*—were temptations Jesus confronted throughout his ministry and over which he agonized as he wrestled with his commitment to his father in the Garden of Gethsemane as the prospect of his immanent death for his faith in God approached.

At the core of every temptation, every sin is **PRIDE**. If you take the noun "sin": remove the consonants "s" and "n" you're left with the vowel "i." The temptations Jesus faced, and that we face in their multifaceted forms, are ultimately the temptation to live for self in relationship to God, others, the world of nature and my truest self.

It is here, in our temptations, that we need to pray to God, as Jesus did, to have the strength to meet, and through divine grace, defeat Satan at his game. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI also writing about the petition in the "Our Father" regarding temptation states: "When we pray it we are saying to God: ...please remember that my strength goes only so far. Don't overestimate my capacity. Don't set too wide the boundaries within which I can be tempted, and be close to me with your protecting hand when it becomes too much for me". (Jesus of Nazareth. Joseph Ratzinger, p. 163.)

As we set out into the desert of Lent to wrestle with temptation we pray: "Be with us, Lord, when we are in trouble. Be with us Lord, we pray."