

First Sunday of Lent

Dear Friends,

Lent is the season to go into us inside, clean ourselves and rejuvenate our life. We do an annual checkup and periodical visit to have a healthy life. Lent is a time of repentance and renewal. The readings for Lent are always helping us to realize our dependency on God in our lives. In a special way, all the first readings are selected and placed in such a way that helps us to develop our relationship with God gradually. This year I would like to reflect and pray with you all the first readings.

This week, we have a beautiful first reading from the book of Genesis. It comes from the second of two creation stories. We all know the story. I would like to reflect in three parts. The creation of human and his necessities: the symbolic story begins with God forming human and other creatures. The first human being is both of the earth and of God. God formed human being in his own image and likeness. This is the first thing we need to understand that God formed each one of us. As we read in the book of Jeremiah 18, we are a clay in his hands. As a potter, he designed each one of us according to his wish and design. He loved the first human being Adam; he loves us today. God gave everything humans wanted. God established a covenant with us at the moment of creation, and we keep this covenant by freely placing ourselves in God's hands and being responsive to God's invitation to live in communion with him.

There is a space for good and bad: St. Paul in the second reading explains how sin entered the world through one man and glory came with another man. From the beginning of the world, there was a space for Good and evil. God gave that freedom to humans. Lots of times, we ask why God gives me the temptations? Or why there is evil in the world? We allowed both to exist through our human freedom. The snake (as symbol of evil) made use of the space. There is a space in us that struggles between good and evil. It is not the matter who gave. The bible writers at that time reflect the prevalent culture of the world. It is not important, but the point we share our good as well as evil with others.

Next, we have realization of evil in our life: the story ends with their realization of themselves. The story teaches human weakness for sinning and disobeying God. Fear, shyness, alienation, shame, blame and other subtle characters came to us. The rest of the chapter gives the detail of human's hard work. They lost all the privileges of the Garden. The Garden and all the goodness are banished from their sight. Temptations teach us so many lessons.

The gospel also talks about temptation. There is a key for us from Jesus. Trusting in God will help us to face and overcome the temptation. Adam and Eve broke their trust with God, and they fell into temptation and sin. Jesus on the contrary became the proto – type of salvation.

What is our choice over temptation? We can either complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorns have roses.

How do we use our freedom to respond God's invitation?

We are to confront and conquer temptations as Jesus did, using the means he employed. Every one of us is tempted to seek sinful pleasures, easy wealth, and a position of authority, power, and glory, and to use any means, even unjust or sinful ones, to gain these things. Jesus serves as a model for us in conquering temptations by strengthening himself through prayer, penance, and the effective use of the Word of God. Hence, during this Lent, let us confront our evil tendencies with prayer (especially by participating in the Holy Mass), with penance, and with meditative reading of the Bible.