

Temptation or Triumph

By Rodney Van Bibber

Today's readings start in the Book of Genesis with the Story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden where their struggle with temptation is described. Today's readings finish in Matthew with Jesus dealing with temptation while in the desert. Settings and outcomes are different.

The first reading from Genesis discusses Adam and Eve. Their story takes place in a garden that God has created for their pleasure and comfort. Genesis describes a paradise that is plentiful and allows them to reap nourishment of every desire without effort. Adam and Eve are given plenty of anything they could ever want or need. They are told there is only one thing they are not supposed to do. God gives them free will and they choose to yield to temptation, defy God, and do the one and only thing he does not want them to do. In doing so humankind loses everything: the whole world, everlasting life, and continuing to exist guilt free. Temptation won.

Our final readings from Matthew describe Jesus going into the desert which is void of pleasure, comfort, and nourishment. By contrast Jesus uses his free will to go to a place of deprivation and rejects repeated opportunities to defy God's will. Jesus is tempted with alleviating his hunger by turning stones into bread and by inheriting the world by turning away from God. Adam and Eve were created by God and through disobedience are credit with committing the original sin resulting in death. Jesus came to this world committed no sin, and by remaining obedient to God offers the world everlasting life. Jesus represents triumph.

So, now we have begun the 40 Day Lenten Season and we have free will. Do we want to be like Adam and Eve or like Jesus? Jesus spent 40 days fasting, praying. What do we want to do with our 40 days? Hopefully we chose to pray and fast. This is a well-known part of our Catholic Tradition. However, we can choose to do more. We can choose to become even closer with God through also reading the Bible, giving thanks, singing songs of praise, practicing humility, sharing God with others, giving to charity and acts of kindness more than normal.

God has given us free will. The inherent temptation is to treat the 40 Days of Lent to meet the minimum requirements of our Faith. In a way this is giving in to temptation. On the other hand, we can take advantage of this time to become closer to God and deepen our Faith. The latter represents a triumph. So, which will we choose: temptation or triumph?