

1st SUNDAY in LENT (A-3) (Translation)

Boy do we love to be like God, but without all the responsibilities. Look at Eve. She's told that she'd be like God, knowing right from wrong, good from evil. How interesting that, when Adam and Eve's eyes were opened, they knew the difference, and their reaction was to cover up. Cover up is a good term to use for people who do wrong and then try to get out of the consequences. Kids, what do you do when you are caught doing wrong? You either pass the buck like Adam and Eve did blaming the devil, or you lie, "I didn't do it. I swear to God I didn't!"

And how we seek to find loop-holes in God's Word and God's Law! We seek to be saved in the easiest form possible. Many of our protestant brothers/sisters are convinced they're saved by just "saying" Jesus is their personal Lord and Savior, never mind "showing" it every day. They are prone to the sin of Omission. We Catholics, on the other hand, are convinced we earn salvation by our works, and so we fall prey to our own rationale and thinking, so ours are sins of Commission.

We also love to manipulate people, don't we? Have you ever used a sentence that begins with, "If you really love me..."? Mothers, be honest! Boys and men, be honest! I see smiles, so you have. Academy award winners have nothing on true manipulators. What does this phrase do? It causes one to do what you want, not out of love but out of guilt, or to avoid being looked down upon or judged. We want our way, and we're going to get it by hook or crook.

Well, the devil began Christ's temptations with, "If you are the son of God..." What a conniving manipulator he is! He knew Jesus was the Son of God, but Jesus was just discovering it. He begins by trying to get Jesús to leave his humanity and return to his divinity, short-circuiting his mission to be fully human so that we discover our divine purpose. Jesus responds astutely. He quotes the same scriptures as the devil, to

refute and resist the temptation to leave his mission behind.

So what does all this tell us about us? It tells us that we had better have a handle on our own mission if we are to resist the one who tempts us in order to leave our mission behind. Is our mission possible or impossible? That is our question today. Unless we are convinced that our mission in life is possible, then we can be prey to every con alive.

Sins are sins. They show that we seek to control the uncontrollable in order to be happy. We fall prey to the instant gratification that habits can bring, and we stop discerning what really leads to joy and peace: acts that are righteous. What can help us avoid falling?

Prayer, fasting, and alms-giving! Prayer is intimate communication with God. It's not just speaking, rather it's more listening. To really listen, we must be quiet. In Isaiah 58 we find the kind of fast God wants: feed the hungry; clothe the naked; free the oppressed. In other words, do the Good Works of our Mission Statement, and the corporal works of mercy of the Church. And alms-giving: this means giving to our parish, to our Diocese, and to organizations that help serve the poor, thankful for all we've received from God. If we do all this, we have nothing to fear, for we'll have stopped looking for the easy way, for loop-holes.

The choice is ours. Choose wisely.