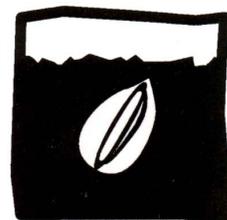


1st Sunday of Lent C

*Upon you no evil shall fall,
no plague approach where you dwell.
For you has he commanded his angels,
to keep you in all your ways. (Ps 90:10-11)*



First Reading

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Moses said to the people: "The priest shall take the panner from your hand and lay it before the altar of the Lord your God. Then, in the sight of the Lord your God, you must make this pronouncement:

'My father was a wandering Aramaean. He went down into Egypt to find refuge there, few in numbers; but there he became a nation, great, mighty, and strong. The Egyptians ill-treated us, they gave us no peace and inflicted harsh slavery on us. But we called on the Lord, the God of our fathers. The Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders. He brought us here and gave us this land, a land where milk and honey flow. Here then I bring the first-fruits of the produce of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.' You must then lay them before the Lord your God, and bow down in the sight of the Lord your God."

Second Reading

Romans 10:8-13

Scripture says: The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart. If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved. When scripture says: those who believe in him will have no cause for shame, it makes no distinction between Jew and Greek: all belong to the same Lord who is rich enough, however many ask for his help, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God tell this stone to turn into a loaf." But Jesus replied, "Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone."

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours." But Jesus answered him, "Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone."

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said to him "throw yourself down from here, for scripture says: He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you, and again: They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone." But Jesus answered him, "It has been said: You must not put the Lord your God to the test." Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

Meditation

The gospel tradition joins the account of Jesus' temptation by Satan to the story of his baptism. Led into the desert by the Spirit received at the Jordan, Jesus is subjected to trial during his forty day fast. Here Luke seizes the occasion to present the two protagonists of a drama which will reach its climax at "the appointed hour", Good Friday. By confronting his principal antagonist at the beginning of his public life, Jesus clarifies his understanding of the messianic role.

First, he does not use his power as magic for selfish ends. Second, he situates his sovereignty as Son of God in relation to the political realities of this world. His reign is subject only to God from whom he has received all that he is. Finally, led to Jerusalem to endure the passion, he refuses to tempt his Father by demanding special protection, although it would vindicate his unique claim. Every Christian is tempted: by the worship of money, by the expansion of political power exercised with disdain for human rights, and by the reduction of religion to a tool of human ambition.

These are so many masks donned by the devil who is most clever when he makes us doubt his existence. Like the Son of God in the desert, we are called in this time of prayer and fasting to re-identify our Christian vocation.