

Listening Only to Jesus



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Deut 26: 4-10)

Context of worship

⁴The priest shall then take the basket from your hands and set it in front of the altar of the LORD your God.

Abraham, a wandering Aramean, becoming great

⁵Then you shall declare in the presence of the LORD, your God, “My father was a refugee Aramean* who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as a resident alien.^b But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous.

Oppression in Egypt

^{6c} When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing harsh servitude upon us, ⁷we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression.

Great deeds of God

⁸Then the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders,^d ⁹and brought us to this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.^e

Invitation to worship God

¹⁰Now, therefore, I have brought the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, LORD, have given me.” You shall set them before the LORD, your God, and you shall bow down before the LORD, your God.

THE FOCUS: The great deeds of God upon Israel

COMMENTARY

• In the text, Moses is speaking. The book of Deuteronomy is described as sermon of Moses, before the Israelites enter the Promised Land (v.4).

• He reminds them of what the Israelites do when they are in the Promised Land (v.5).

• To declare (acknowledge) before the Lord their father (wandering Aramean), who had humble beginnings as a foreigner in Egypt, but has become great (v. 5)—sign of God’s blessings.

• To declare Egyptians’ insecurity by their greatness, expressed in oppression, hard labor, maltreatment (v.6)—sin of jealousy.

• To declare God’s attentiveness to their situation (disappointment, afflictions, hard labor and oppression) (v.7). God does not let anything against Israel go unnoticed.

• To declare most of all God’s powerful deeds:

- He **brought** us out of Egypt with accompanying terrible signs.

- He **brought** us into this country: Promised Land, “land flowing with milk and honey = abundance (v.8).

• V.10 speaks of the logical thing to do: to bow down (worship), recognize God.

REFLECTIONS

The text recalls Israel’s humble, small beginnings and great ends. Abundance is a sign of God’s blessings. Hence, the ones experiencing God’s blessings must **worship** God.

Just an important note:

It is our experience that when someone makes progress, others pull one down (*crab mentality*). The Egyptians pulled down the Israelites as they multiplied and became great.

Pulling down can be systematic (*passing of unjust laws, control of population and movements, imposition of harsh laws, taxes, etc.*).

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15)

BE WITH ME, LORD, WHEN I AM IN TROUBLE.

SECOND READING (Rom 10:8-13)

The word of faith, preached

^{8b}But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we preach),

The content of the word of faith and its consequence

⁹ⁱfor, if you **confess*** with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For one **believes** with the heart and so is justified, and one **confesses** with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹For the scripture says, “No one who **believes** in him will be put to shame.” ^{12a}For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. ¹³For “everyone who **calls on the name of the Lord** will be saved.”

THE FOCUS: The faith in Jesus Christ

COMMENTARY

- St. Paul develops what the word is all about: That word is word of faith. It is preached by the apostles.
- The content of the word is: Jesus is Lord. God raised him from the dead
- The consequence of believing or confessing this: salvation. You will be saved (vv.9 and 13), is saved (v.10), not put to shame (v.11).
- It does not matter whether one is a Jew or Greek: Lord is Lord of all. He offers salvation to all who believe. Salvation is for all people.
- It does not discriminate against anyone who believes and calls upon his name.

REFLECTIONS

Like the demand of the First Reading, we must give witness to our faith. We must articulate it. We confess that Jesus is Lord.

Faith in him leads to salvation/justification, no matter what race we belong to.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 4:1-13)

Setting (after the baptism)

^{1*} “Filled with the holy Spirit,* Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert ^{2b}for forty days,* to be **tempted** by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.

First temptation and Jesus’ response

³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ^{4c}Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

Second temptation and Jesus’ response

⁵Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. ^{6d}The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. ⁷All this will be yours, if you worship me.” ^{8e}Jesus said to him in reply, “It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord, your God,/ and him alone shall you serve.’”

Third temptation and Jesus’ response

^{9e}Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written:/ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,/ to guard you,’ ^{11g}and:/ ‘With their hands they will support you,/ lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” ^{12h}Jesus said to him in reply, “It also says, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’”

Defeat of the devil, but will be coming back

^{13*} When the devil had finished every **temptation**, he departed from him for a time.

THE FOCUS: The Temptations of Jesus

COMMENTARY

- The text is about the temptations of Jesus.
- It is popularly known as the three temptations of Jesus, but see the last verse.
- The first temptation is about responding to the immediate material needs.
- The response of Jesus should be a source of embarrassment to those whose minds are always focused on eating, acquiring material possessions.
- They should learn how to listen to the word of God, which is life-giving.
- The second temptation is about craving for power and domination.
- The response of Jesus should embarrass those who are always expanding their authority and power, even by ignoring the real God (worshipping the devil = doing his evil teachings).
- Life is not a matter of attaining what you want, even to the extent of using evil means, forgetting God. Don’t sacrifice God.
- The third one is about craving for prestige.
- The response of Jesus should teach those who are obsessed with making a name. We should not endanger our lives to earn prestige and popularity.

We should not presume God's help if we endanger ourselves. God is not stupid. Don't be stupid.

- Jesus' responses are scriptural. The devil also uses scriptures to tempt Jesus.

REFLECTIONS

Temptations are here to stay. We are always tempted to appropriate material things and riches (*Greed is a built-in mechanism in our psyche which needs to be controlled*).

We are always tempted to show off our wealth (new signature clothes, latest cellphones, new cars, latest acquisitions, manpower, etc.)

But we can always say no to temptations, if we want. How?

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

We are now in the season of Lent and we are asked to defeat evil. The First Reading asks us to acknowledge God who has done wondrous things for us. Let us bow down to him, not to other gods. The Second Reading tells us to put our belief in Jesus as the Lord. He is our boss, no one else. The Gospel Reading tells us to overcome temptations. Our lives must be controlled by God, spirit-led, and not by our tendencies, cravings and desires, by no one else.

How to develop your homilies

Begin by telling a story about your temptations, how you fell into them, or how you overcame them.

Many temptations: to buy what is not needed, to eat too much, steal money and things of others, to cheat, forbidden sex, to be violent, to take vengeance, etc.

Temptations are not sins, according to our catechism. If we fall into them, that is a sin.

When temptations come, we must do the following:

We go back to God (worship him, pray), not allow anyone to control our thinking and our lives. (First Reading)

We confess that Jesus is Lord. Jesus must be

our boss and master, not someone else. He is our salvation (Second Reading).

We must listen to the voice of God (through the sacred scriptures). No compromises with the devil, our urgings or tendencies (Gospel Reading).

Jesus was focused on his own identity as the son of God when he was tempted in the desert. We too must be focused on our Christian identity (children of God, by virtue of baptism).

In this season of Lent, not only are we asked to do penance and sacrifices, fasting and abstinence, but also we must hone our attention to God who speaks.

This season of Lent is preparation for the celebration of Easter, the resurrection of Christ. Jesus' resurrection is his victory over evil and death.

His being son of God is affirmed. We are adopted children of God through Jesus.

We too are expected to behave like Jesus.

We do not give in to the suggestions, enticements, seductions, allurements of the devil.

The devil can be speaking through the advertisements, enticing us to buy this or that, to eat this or that, to adopt this thinking or that which is foreign to God.

The devil can be our pride, our greed, our lust, our cravings for anything that destroys our relationship with God and with one another. It can be us.

The devil is the one who makes us doubt our identity. He made Jesus doubt twice: "If you are the Son of God..." (vv.3 and 9).

There is no such thing as salvation if we prefer listening to ourselves, trying to justify our positions even if we are wrong or if we are busy entertaining the tempter.

The true Christian is the one who always says no to the devil, yes to the Lord.

One does not make compromises when one is torn between the world and God. One always chooses God.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is Migrant's Sunday. What are the good things our OFWs have given up just to work abroad?

2. In what ways do Filipinos abroad become stepping stones to Christian Faith propagation. (HM).