

**THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, Year C**  
Dt 26:4-10; Ps 91:1-2,10-15; Rom 10:8-13; Lk 4:1-13

***THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS***

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun  
Sunday, February 21, 2010, 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Masses  
Homily drawn from: Ratzinger, J., *Jesus of Nazareth*, 25-45.

“The devil said to him [Jesus],  
‘If you are the Son of God, command that this stone to become bread’” (Lk 4:3).

The devil demanded, taunted: “If you are the Son of God, [prove it!]”  
The devil was saying, in so many words,  
“Jesus, unless you do something utterly amazing,  
if you don’t work some great miracle here,  
you are not believable.”

Satan used hunger as a way to discredit God.  
Satan is the deceiver, the liar,  
and Satan’s argument is very persuasive, and it goes like this:  
“If God is a loving God, then God would never let you, Jesus, go hungry,  
and God would never let the people of the world go hungry either.  
If you, Jesus, are really the Son of God,  
and if you really are the presence of God among us,  
you have the power to feed yourself and everyone else.  
If you don’t, you are nothing!”

Jesus flatly refused the devil.  
There was no miracle for the devil.  
The devil had no faith in Jesus,  
and with this hostility and defiance,  
his insistence that Jesus prove himself,  
there would be no miracle (see Mk 6:5-6).

Except, sometimes you and me, we think the same way the devil does:  
“If Jesus doesn’t do something great for me,  
or if Jesus does not do something great for someone else, or the world,  
Jesus is not believable.”  
We are inclined to demand proof.

“If you are the Son of God, command that I get this new job.”  
“If you are the Son of God, command that this cancer go away.”  
“If you are the Son of God, command that all of this fighting in our family will stop.”  
“If you really are a loving God, I will get this new job.”  
“If you really are a loving God, the cancer will go away.”  
“If you really are a loving God, the fighting in our family will stop.”

“If you, Jesus, are the Son of God, prove it!  
If you don’t do anything, you are not believable!”

But, my friends,  
this is not about bread or a new job,  
not about cancer or family feuds;  
it is about faith.

The question is what is more important:  
a full belly or God,  
a new job or God,  
a cure or God,  
family harmony or God.

Nourishment, employment, health, and family are all important,  
but in the big picture, God is most important.  
The temptation of the devil, of the world,  
is to put food or drink ahead of God,  
or a good job ahead of God, our health ahead of God.  
or our family relationships before God, above God.  
The fundamental question for you and me is the primacy of God:  
what or who is most important in our lives.

The devil would try to trick us:  
“Look at Jesus, here.  
No stone to bread, no miracle;  
no proof, he is powerless, he is not believable.”

The devil doesn’t tell us that Jesus is the Bread of Life (Jn 6:35,48),  
and the reason that Jesus came into the world was to feed us, to save us.  
Eventually, Jesus would do much better than turning a stone into bread.  
Jesus would take five loaves and feed five thousand (Lk 9:10-17).  
How’s that for a miracle?  
Even better, on Holy Thursday night, at the Last Supper,  
Jesus would lift up a simple loaf of bread and say,  
“This is my body” (Lk 22:19),  
“whoever eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:51).  
And on Good Friday, when Jesus hung on the Cross,  
Jesus gave his flesh for the life of the world.  
How’s that for living bread? How’s that for a miracle?

The proof is not changing a stone to bread.  
The proof is on the Cross.  
Jesus loves us so much that he laid down his life for us.  
If we’re looking for a miracle, all we need to do is look at the Cross!

Jesus' greatest feeding miracle will be reenacted on this altar at this Mass.  
It will not be a stone that will be changed into bread on this altar.  
No, mere bread will be changed into the Body of Christ,  
and the feeding miracle will happen once more.

The devil would have us believe that bread alone is enough.  
If you have enough bread, enough food to eat, you will be happy.

Or, if you get a new job, you'll be happy;  
or if you are cured of your cancer, you'll be happy;  
or if everyone in your family gets along, you'll be happy.

But, if we're truthful, we know this is a lie.  
We can have a full stomach, and still be hungry;  
we can have a good job, and still be feel unfulfilled;  
we can be cured of cancer, and still be sick spiritually;  
we can get along famously in our family, and still lack real joy.

The devil is giving us false criteria for judging God's power.

So Jesus says, "One does not live by bread alone" (Lk 4:4; Dt 8:3),  
"but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4).

The real miracle is not a stone into bread, but how Jesus feeds every day:  
with his word in the gospels and his Body in the Eucharist.

Bread is important, but Jesus is more important.

The devil is trying to confuse us, deceive us.  
The devil's lie is: "Jesus is no big deal.  
The most important things are a comfortable life:  
enough food, a good job, good health, getting along with people."

My friends, if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God,  
and if we give our total allegiance to Jesus,  
and place Jesus above all things in our life,  
Jesus will be with us and take care of us:  
whether we are well fed or hungry,  
whether we have a good job or are unemployed,  
whether we are healthy or sick,  
whether we are well-connected or lonely.

The devil's first temptation was, "If you are the Son of God, [prove it],  
command this stone to become bread" (Lk 4:3).  
The proof is not in a stone turned into bread.  
The proof is on the Cross where Jesus gave his life for us.