

## **BISHOP MANUEL ANTONIO'S HOMILY FOR THE 1st SUNDAY OF LENT, SUNDAY OF THE TEMPTATIONS**

At the beginning of this Lenten journey, the liturgy invites us to rethink our life starting from the choices that are presented to us, the values that we consider important for a meaningful life, and the goals that we intend to achieve. As a time of conversion and renewal, Lent is the favorable moment to draw near to God again. It is in God – and not in other proposals, however enchanting they may be – that the source of true life is found. He created us to be happy and to live a life with meaning, but He left us free in our choices. Today's readings show us the consequences of a choice against God's plans and a choice in accordance with God's plans.

In the first reading, we find a symbolic narration of the fundamental temptation of man and its consequences. Man always has within him the temptation to want to be the master of his destiny, to want to control his life. Created free, God does not force us to do His will; there is always a forbidden fruit that we can eat. But we must be aware of the consequences of our acts. When we want to be the masters of our life, we end up confronting our sinful reality, our misery, our unworthiness. Only God can clothe us with the garments of sons by offering us His love. If we decide to embrace God's will, we will know a happiness without limits and be fully fulfilled; but, if we choose to listen to the temptation of selfishness, self-sufficiency, arrogance, greed, we will live surrounded by fleeting, empty things, which will never fully quench our thirst for happiness. We will always meet our unworthiness. But let us be certain that God will never abandon us; He will always have His Fatherly embrace waiting for us and a tunic of love with which to clothe us.

In the second reading, the apostle Paul places before us two examples, two models of life, symbolized in Adam and Jesus. Adam represents the man who chose to ignore God's proposals and decide for himself the paths he should follow to fulfill himself; Jesus is the man who decided always to follow the will of the Father, to obey His plans, to walk the path that God indicated to Him, even if that path meant passing through the cross. Thus we have in contrast the disobedience of Adam, which brought into the world selfishness, suffering and death, and the

obedience of Jesus, which became for the world and for all men an inexhaustible source of love, of grace and of life. And we are invited to look at Adam and Jesus and to see who we follow. Do we follow Adam, wanting selfishly to be masters of our life without wanting to know God's plans, or do we follow Jesus, seeking like Him to place our destiny in the hands of the Father, knowing that we entrust ourselves to the infinite love of God.

In the Gospel, we have the episode of the temptations of Jesus in the desert. Before Jesus two paths are set, as happened with Adam: the path of the Father's plans to give His life for the salvation of the People, or the path of wanting to do His own will, choosing a way of power, fame and glory. In the first reading, we find Adam, who was not able to resist the seduction of the serpent, of the devil; here, in the Gospel, we also find the devil trying to seduce Jesus, even using the very word of Sacred Scripture, but Jesus always refuses his proposals and the values that the devil offers Him and that put into question God's project for the world and for humanity. For Jesus, God's values always had primacy over material goods, over the intoxication offered by easy success and the thirst for power. From His disciples Jesus asks that they follow a path similar to His.

Our life cannot be reduced to having bread, to having riches, to satisfying our material needs, but we need to seek the bread that nourishes us for Eternal Life and that only Christ can give us.

Our life cannot revolve around fame, glory, or appearances, but we must choose the paths of humility, knowing that everything is a gift from God.

Our life cannot be a search for power, or for admirers, but a disinterested service to God present in our brothers, particularly in the poor brother and the one who suffers.

Let us learn from Jesus always to follow, in our life, the ways of God, which are ways where the cross is present, but the only ways that open to us the doors of an authentic and happy life, because it is a life where we know that we are deeply loved by God. And love is the only path to a free and happy life.

AMEN.