



We learn from this week's Gospel (Mt 4:1-11) that immediately after Jesus was baptized, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights and was assaulted with temptations from the devil. In the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer for today's celebration of the Holy Mass, we are given insight into why Jesus fasted and engaged the devil in the desert:

"By abstaining forty long days from earthly food, he consecrated through his fast the pattern of our Lenten observance and, by overturning all the snares of the ancient serpent, taught us to cast out the leaven of malice..."

Two questions:

- 1) What were the "snares of the ancient serpent" that Jesus overturned?
- 2) What does it mean to say Jesus "consecrated through his fast our Lenten Observance"?

In the First Reading (Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7,) we see the three-fold "snares" employed by the serpent to deceive Adam and Eve into violating God's law. The Devil has not changed, he tempts us the same way! In the Gospel, Jesus "overturns all the snares of the ancient serpent" by overcoming these 3 temptations.

THREE-FOLD "SNARES OF THE ANCIENT SERPENT"			
<i>"Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever."</i> (1 John 2:15-17)			
The three-fold Snares: 1 John 2:16	Lust of the Flesh (bodily pleasures)	Lust of the eyes (greed)	Pretentious life (pride, self-exaltation)
Devil lies to Eve (Gn 3), "Surely you will not die!" Forbidden fruit is:	"Good for food" (if it feels good do it; don't listen to God, enjoy!)	"Pleasing to the eyes" (Greed: want it? grab it! God only deprives you!)	"Good for wisdom" (disobey God, eat the fruit, and you will become like God!)
Jesus overturns the "snares of the ancient serpent." (Mt 4)	When tempted to turn stone into bread for physical pleasure against God's will: "Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God!"	When tempted to worship the devil in order to obtain worldly riches: "The Lord your God shall you worship and him alone shall you serve."	When tempted to exalt himself and put God to the test by throwing himself down from the temple: "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."

In answer to the second question, Jesus' fast consecrated, or made holy, the pattern of our Lenten observance because he was acting on our behalf; now, He invites us to unite our penances with his in order to allow us to willingly participate in his victory over temptation. Our Catechism teaches us:

Jesus' temptation reveals . . . why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."
By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. (CCC 540).

What a privileged time of year! Our Lord invites us in these forty days to unite our prayers and penances with his in order to destroy the works of the devil and win victory over sin and death. May we all participate with enthusiasm! Happy Lent!

Your Servant in Christ,
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