

As we are reflecting on the gifts of the Holy Spirit during this lent, today we speak about the gift of understanding. This gift of understanding helps us to understand better the temptations of Jesus in today's reading and apply it to our lives. The three temptations are: to change stone into bread that is the temptation for material things, to worship the devil, that is the temptation for power, and to fall down from the pinnacle of the Temple, that is the temptation of pride and disobedience to God. In the temptation, we see the human and divine side of Jesus. As human, Jesus was tempted but as divine, He overcame the temptation. It's not that the devil learned something from the temptation of Jesus but we learn something, God is telling us who we are, and that our Christian life is like desert, filled with temptation in many ways, for material things, power and position,.. etc. The devil tempts our faith. There is a spiritual struggle in each of us. The devil attacks us when we are vulnerable and lonely as he did in the vulnerability of Eve. It created the spirit of curiosity in her that if she ate the forbidden fruit she would be equal to God and understand the good and evil. Jesus was tempted in the desert, in his need for food, power and strength. Our hunger is not just for food for our body but also nutrition to our souls.

Through our temptation, the devil wants us to give up our faith, lose our hope, disobey the commands of God, to fall into sin, to be selfish and greedy and thus to distance ourselves from our loving relationship with the Father and to forget the greatness of our God, His great love and mercy for us. Jesus understood the temptation of the devil with his false promises and also understood the God's will because the Spirit of understanding was with him. In the second reading St. Paul makes us understand that as sin came into the world from Adam through his disobedience, so the salvation and grace of God comes to us through Jesus, the new Adam, by his obedience to God. The first man was tempted and fell in sin, but Jesus, the new Adam also was tempted in human frailty, but with God's Spirit he overcame it. So we also need to understand our human frailty but more than that God's presence with us and the more we are weak, the more we are strong.

We see in the 1st reading that "the woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing or attractive to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining equality with God and understanding to know the good and evil. The things of this world also look like pleasing and attractive to our eyes and mind, desirable to gain pleasure, peace and all that we want but when we possess it then we become empty, frustrated, depressed and come know falsity of the world. Sometimes our human understanding blinds our eyes and we don't see as we should. We need the divine understanding to see things as God sees, because the gift of Understanding is the ability to recognize truth in the Catholic Faith, to see the world as God sees. Pope Francis says, "the gift of understanding is not human understanding, rather, it is a grace that only the Holy Spirit can infuse and that awakens in a Christian, the ability to go beyond the outward appearance of reality and to probe the depths of the thoughts of God and his plan of salvation." The gift of understanding is not a higher IQ in terms of quantum physics but it is a higher spiritual IQ in terms of the things that matter most. The gift of understanding allows us to 'to read inwardly' and enables us to understand things as God understands them.

This gift operates in several ways: first, disclosing the hidden meaning of sacred Scripture, it makes the Bible come alive in our hearts, as we see Jesus in the today's gospel. Each time the Satan tempted Jesus, He makes known the real meaning of scripture to Satan. For example; Satan said "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." But Jesus says "It is written: *One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*" When Satan said to Jesus to worship him, Jesus said, it is written "*The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.*" As Our Lord Jesus did with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, so also the Holy Spirit opens our minds to understand better the things of God and human things. The gift of understanding also shows us the hand of God at work in our lives, even in the most mysterious or troublesome events, like suffering; and also reveals the spiritual realities in sensible appearances, like recognizing the presence of Christ in the holy Eucharist. This gift also helps us to understand the creation as gift from Almighty God and to place God first in life, to be generous in helping others in need, and to reject what is useless. For example, we may spend much time, even hours, on Facebook or texting, but neglect daily prayer; but the spirit of understanding helps us to seek for sustaining friendship with Our Lord. So let us ask it of the Lord, that He may give us all this gift to understand the things that happen as He understands them, and to understand, above all, the Word of God in the Gospel."