

The Human Temptations of our Divine Lord

1st Sunday of Lent – Year C

Deuteronomy 26:4-10
Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

Romans 10:8-13
Luke 4:1-13

"We're only human!"

So states a common phrase used by many people to downplay, or outright excuse, the otherwise scandalous behavior of either another or themselves. Whenever we see an admired celebrity fall from grace, overcome by scandal or caught in less than admirable behavior, there are always those who choose to soften the public blow by downplaying our very humanity—"they're only human".

My response to such a comment is simply, "so is Jesus."

Of course, we cannot deny the divinity of Christ. But have we ever truly pondered those biblical passages that reflect upon the nature of the Incarnation? *"He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness"* (Phil 2:7). *"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin"* (Heb 4:15). Jesus is not "only" human, nor is he superhuman, "with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men." Jesus is human, having taken on our human form and entered fully into the human experience.

This includes the experience of temptation. We see this especially played

out during His forty-day sojourn in the desert, when Satan played upon Jesus' very humanity to draw Him away from His mission as the Son of God; when Jesus encountered temptations that go with having too much time on His hands in a remote location with little more to do than think, pray and grow hungry. Being alone would invariably intensify the temptations. After all who would know?



First, Jesus experienced hunger. While the temptation was to use His divine power to produce food, it was also a temptation to fulfill a basic human need. Such a temptation would naturally coincide with other human drives such as thirst, survival and our reproductive drives and instincts. To this, Jesus declares that we do not live solely on the attributes of our humanity, be it "bread", drink, or our procreative appetites, urges

and orientations.

Second, Jesus experienced temptation that played upon basic pride. Being the divine Son of God would naturally invite temptation to demonstrate His divinity; in this case by throwing himself off the Temple. After all, being faithful to the person that He is, would it be

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wrong to simply do what He is capable of doing? Such a temptation would coincide with the human desire to "show off" as a matter of pride; or to behave in a way contrary to God's purpose because "that's the way I was made" or "I have to be faithful to who I am." To this, Jesus gives an example of what it means to die to ourselves and live for the will of God in stalwart faith that needs no proofs.

Third, Jesus experiences the temptation of expediency, aimed ultimately at disobedience. Jesus, the divine Son, became human to save humanity by suffering and dying. Naturally that would come with the temptation to achieve the same goal in a more convenient, less painful way; in this case worshiping Satan, even for only a brief moment. After all, the same result, just a different means; alone in the

desert, no one would see, and the goal would be achieved. To this, Jesus gives a reply that speaks strongly to the popular temptation that "the ends justify the means". As we all have free will to act as we choose, we must nonetheless exercise our freedom within the parameters of obedience to God and his laws.

With these three temptations Jesus identifies with our humanity in its totality. By descending from on high to be incarnate as a man, Jesus re-asserted our humanity to the dignity of a race created in the image and likeness of God. As such, we are not ONLY human. Rather, like Jesus, as God created us, we are HUMAN!

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