February 16, 2016

Dear friends,

I have been thinking about the gospel from last Sunday, and am wrestling with it some more. First, I am struck by the idea that each of our liturgical seasons to this point begins with God identifying with us and where we are. He finds us in the darkness, he takes on our flesh, he identifies with our sinfulness, and we begin Lent with a story of Jesus identifying with our temptations.

For temptations to have any power over us, they have to address our needs, our weaknesses at the moment. For Jesus, it meant taking care of his hunger, offering him immediate power without pain or suffering, and testing the Father will be there for him. Maybe we don't fast for forty days, and maybe we don't expect to rule over nations, or be thrown off cliffs or buildings, but our temptations come from the same roots.

We hunger in many ways. And we often act to satisfy that hunger in ways that gorge us, or offer an immediate rush without any long term satisfaction, or without asking for help when it is available, and thus separating ourselves from God, and others. We often seize control rather than working with others, and make ourselves our own gods. And we often test rather than trust God.

I think we often overlook that in becoming fully human, Jesus took on temptation as well as everything else. It is part of what makes us human, for temptations reflect our ability to choose. In answering the temptations, Jesus drew upon the scriptures, and his relationship with the Father for strength to choose life and relationships. In our journey, we have the scriptures, we have our community, we have our relationship with God through Jesus to guide our choices, to face the temptations. May this Lent be a time we step back and consider how we respond to hunger, or ask for help, or trust in God's presence. The temptation associated with each is to act in such a way that we separate ourselves, empower ourselves. May God help us answer each temptation with a choice to love, engage, and unite.

In Christ,
Fr David