

Homily
February 26, 2023
1st Sunday of Lent
23:44-35:53

You all know what these are, don't you? (Holds up a box of Girl Scout cookies)

Temptation! That's what they are!

Those little girls coming up to you going (in a sweet little girl voice), "Would you buy some Girl Scout Cookies, please?" We all have our favorites, don't we? These are Trefoils. I've loved Trefoils since I was a little boy. They *tempt* me. Because I have an appetite for them. And that appetite can take me down two tubes of these without thinking.

Temptation. Little Girl Scouts. Brownies. Leading me to temptation!

Well, that's not fair. They just want to make a buck to help support what they're doing. But every time one of them comes to me and says (in a sweet little girl voice), "Would you buy some cookies please?" I have to! Not because they've asked, but it's because I'm tempted. I have an appetite. Yum, yum!

We have heard, as we always do on the First Sunday of Lent, of the Temptation of Jesus in the desert. This year that event is also contrasted to the Temptation in the Garden.

Now let's take a look at the two settings. First there is the Garden where everything is provided, everything that is needed to survive and do well – including the presence of God, who walked in the Garden with the man and the woman.

Second, there is the desert. It's a place of desolation, but it's also a place of just what is needed. No more. No extras. And it leads one to realize of their need for God.

Notice that the Lord is led there by the Spirit. And he spends 40 days and 40 nights. Then he is tempted. (We'll come back to that.)

There is also Satan, the devil, the serpent if you will, in both stories. In the first he LIES. Satan is the great king of lying. He repeats the words of God. *God didn't really tell you thus and so, did he?* And the woman says – *Well, yes of course. That's exactly what he said.* ...Satan replies, ...no that's not what's going to happen. You're not going to die. You're going to become like God. (Which they already

were in one sense, for when God breathed into them, they received his image and likeness as in the first Creation story.)

But the LIE is this: You have an appetite for this gorgeous fruit. There's nothing wrong with that. Go ahead. Be like God. Make that choice. Yes, underlying that invitation is a LIE.

We know what happens. And the beginning of separation one from another emerges. The man and woman realize they are naked and they clothe themselves in fig leaves and they begin to draw apart. And they draw apart from God, as well. They hide from him later. All because of the LIE told by Satan.

In Jesus' case, Satan comes to tempt him. Yes. And he offers him three things: food, power and idolatry.

It's understandable that Jesus was hungry. Forty days and forty nights is a long time to go without food.

But notice what Jesus does. Every time Satan uses the Word of God to tempt him with the LIE underlying his use of that Word, Jesus rebuts it with the Word of God. Forty days and forty nights in the desert he has spent in prayer, preparing for his mission. He's basically been on retreat. He has fortified himself with not only his love for God, but also what the faith ancestors had handed on. The Word of God.

And when the Devil tries to LIE through the Word, Jesus reveals the TRUTH through the Word. "Don't tempt me." Do not lay an appetite of either food or power, or even – worshiping you - the ultimate liar, before me. It's not going to happen.

Yes. He had the appetites, but he knew more and he used the power of God, saying, "No."

In about 20 minutes, (if I don't go too long here,) we're going to pray the "Our Father." The last two lines go like this, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Why would God lead us into temptation? Well, it's a difficult translation. In the Spanish, it goes like this: *No nos dejes caer en la tentación y líbranos del mal.* Which means, "Do not let us fall into temptation."

Granted that our history in English and most other languages, it says, "Do not lead us..."

But "lead us" does not mean that God is leading, but we will be led into temptation. We can't avoid it. Can we? Have you ever tried to avoid temptation? Well, we're supposed to try to avoid it, but

sometimes it just overwhelms. But we call out, "Deliver us from evil." So my brothers and sisters, we would be delivered by God's loving hand. We need to spend our time examining our appetites. What are they? (Walks toward the cookies) Yum, yum! What are they and how do we allow them to lead us? That's Temptation.

Our appetites are a good thing. Girl Scout cookies are a good thing. But I have to command the power of God to say when to choose. (It doesn't have to be cookies. It can be lots of different things.)

You know what appetites are the most difficult for you to control. They are the ones begging for you to look at this Lent and say, "Lord, when I let them overwhelm me, when the appetite takes control of me, when I'm not thinking and I'm not being intentional – **deliver me**. Let me make the choice through your strength and power, not just habit and not just blind acquiescence to the hunger, whatever it is.

We do not have to believe the LIE. The Devil would say, "Oh don't worry about it. It's just a cookie." It's just this or that. Don't believe the LIE, brothers and sisters. Ask the Lord to give you the strength to hold firm. Live out in a Christian way your appetites, your longings. In doing so, Lent will produce some excellent fruit for the celebration of Easter.