

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

(Mt. 4:1-11) TRACK A 043

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Azariah (1993) p. 27 – (2007) p. 28]

(After being baptized by his cousin, John the Baptist, Jesus leaves the refreshing blue waters of the Jordan, and the green strips of vegetation on its banks, and ventures to a hot & dry place - where there is nothing but solitude, stones and a parched earth. Maria Valtorta describes what she sees...)

Leaning against a huge piece of overhanging rock - which, because of its shape, forms a kind of a grotto - there is Jesus, sitting on a stone that has been taken into the cave. That is how He protects Himself from the scorching sun. Near Him, is the haversack which I saw Him take before departing from Nazareth. It is all He has. And from the way it is folded, I realise it has been emptied of the little food which Mary had put into it. Jesus is very thin and pale.

I see Satan's ugly face appear. He doesn't show himself in the features we imagine him: horns, tail etc. He looks like an Arab wanderer, enveloped in his robe and in a large mantle that resembles a domino. He is wearing a turban on his head, and its white flaps fall along his cheeks down to his shoulders, protecting them. Thus only a very small dark triangle of his face can be seen, with thin, sinuous lips, and very black hollow eyes, full of magnetic flashes. Two eyes that penetrate and read into the bottom of your heart, but in which you can read nothing, or one word only: mystery. These are the very opposite of Jesus' eyes, also so magnetic and fascinating, which read in your heart, but in which you can also read that in His heart, there is love and bounty for you. Jesus' eyes caress your soul. Satan's are like a double dagger that stabs you.

He approaches Jesus: « Are you alone? »

Jesus looks at him, but does not reply.

« How did You happen to be here? Did You get lost? »

Jesus does not look at him.

« You are not answering? Do You know that if You stay here, You will die? The wind is already beginning to blow. There will be a storm. Come. »

Jesus clenches His hands in silent prayer.

« Ah! It is You, then? I have been looking for You for such a long time! And I have been watching You for so long. Since You were baptised. Are You calling the Eternal? He is far away. You are now on the earth, in the midst of men. And I reign over men. And yet, I feel sorry for You, and I want to help You, because You are so good, and You have come to sacrifice Yourself for nothing. Men will hate You because of Your goodness. They understand nothing but gold, food and pleasure. Sacrifice, sorrow, and obedience are words more arid for them than the land around us here. They are more arid than this dust. Only snakes can hide here, waiting to bite, and jackals waiting to tear to pieces. Come with me. It is not worthwhile suffering for them. I know them better than You do. »

Satan has sat down in front of Jesus, and he scrutinises Him with his dreadful eyes, and smiles at Him with his snakelike mouth. Jesus is always silent, and is praying mentally.

« You are hungry and your energy is exhausted. Look at these stones. How round and smooth they look, gilded by the setting sun! Don't they look like loaves of bread? Since You are the Son of God, all You have to say is: "I want" and they will become sweet-smelling bread. Eat Your fill, Son of God. You are the Master of the earth. The earth is bowing down to put itself at Your feet, and satisfy Your hunger.

« Be quiet! "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God". »

The devil starts with anger. He grinds his teeth and clenches his fists. But he controls himself, and turns his grinding into a smile.

« I understand. You are above the necessities of the earth, and You are disgusted at making use of me. I deserved it. But come, then, and see what there is in the House of God. You will see how even priests do not refuse to come to a compromise between the spirit and the flesh. After all, they are men, and not angels. Work a spiritual miracle. I will take You up to the pinnacle of the Temple, and You will undergo a transfiguration and become most handsome". »

« It is said: "You must not put the Lord your God to the test". »

« Well, then, come. Adore me. I will give You the earth. Alexander, Cyrus, Caesar, all the great rulers, past or present, will be like the leaders of miserable caravans compared with You, because You shall have the kingdoms of the world under Your sceptre. And with the kingdoms, all the wealth, all the beautiful things on earth: women, horses, armies and temples. You will be able to raise Your Sign everywhere, when You are the King of kings and the Lord of the world. You will then be obeyed and respected - both by the people, and by the priesthood. All classes will honour and serve You, because You will be the Powerful One, the Only One, the Lord.

Adore me for one moment only! Appease this thirst of mine for being worshipped! It ruined me, but it is still left in me, and I am parched by it. The flames of hell are like a fresh morning breeze compared to this fierce ardour burning inside me. It is my hell, this thirst. One moment, one moment only, Christ. You are so good! One moment of joy for the eternally Tortured One! Let me feel what it is like to be god, and I will be a devoted, obedient servant for all Your life and all Your enterprises. One instant, one instant only, and I will no longer torture You! » And Satan falls on his knees, imploring.

Jesus, instead, stands up. He has lost weight because of the long days of fast, and He now looks taller. His face is terribly severe and potent. His eyes are two burning sapphires. His voice is like thunder: it reverberates in the cave of the huge stone, and spreads over the stony, desolate plain - when He cries: « Be off, Satan. It is written: "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone ". »

Satan, with a cry of fearful torture and indescribable hatred, springs to his feet, a dreadful sight in his furious, smoky figure. And he disappears with a last cursing yell.

Jesus is tired, and sits down, leaning back with His head resting on the stone. He looks exhausted. He is perspiring. But angels come to blow gently with their wings in the closeness of the cave, purifying and refreshing the air. Jesus opens His eyes, and smiles. I do not see Him eat. But I would say He is nourished and re-invigorated by the aroma of Paradise.

(In a dictation that follows this passage, Jesus comments to Maria Valtorta...)

« As you have seen, kindness is always Satan's disguise when he presents himself. He looks like an ordinary person.

If souls are careful, and above all, if they are in spiritual contact with God, they perceive the warning that makes them cautious, and prepares them to fight the devil's snares. But, if souls are distracted, separated from God by an overwhelming sensuality, and are not assisted by prayer - which joins them to God, and pours strength into the hearts of men - then they seldom perceive the snares hidden under this innocent appearance, and they fall into the trap. It is then very difficult for them to free themselves.

The two most common means adopted by Satan, to conquer souls, are sensuality and gluttony. He always starts from material things. Once he has dismantled and subdued the material side, he attacks the spiritual part: first the morals: thoughts with their pride and greed; then the spirit, obliterating not only its love - which no longer exists when man replaces divine love with other human loves - but also the fear of God.

Then, man surrenders his body and soul to Satan, only enjoying what he wants, and enjoying it more and more.

You saw how I behaved. Silence and prayer: silence, because if Satan performs his work of a seducer and comes around us, we must put up with the situation without any foolish impatience or cowardly fears; and we must react with resolution to his presence, and with prayer to his allurements.

It is useless to debate with Satan. He would win, because he is strong in his language. Only God can beat him. So you must have recourse to God, that He may speak for you, and through you. You must show Satan that Name and that Sign, not so much written on paper or engraved on wood, but written and engraved in your hearts. My Name, My Sign. You should answer back to Satan, using the word of God, only when he insinuates that he is like God. He cannot bear that.

Then, after the struggle, there comes victory. And the angels serve and defend the winner from Satan's hatred. They restore him: with celestial dews; with the Grace that they pour, with full hands, into the heart of the faithful son; and with a blessing, that caresses his soul.

One must be determined to defeat Satan, and have faith in God, and in His help. Faith in the power of prayer, and in the Lord's bounty. Then, Satan can do no harm... »

(In a further commentary, Jesus says:)

"...Let us compare the encounter of Lucifer with the First Parents - to Lucifer's encounter with Me, the New Adam, who had come to restore the order violated by the First Man.

I went to a solitary place. But why? When? To do what? To prepare Myself with penance - an indispensable preparation for God's works - for my mission, which was about to begin... The time for evangelization was coming, with the dangers of exaltation and hatred and contacts with sinners and with everything representing what is commonly called the 'world.'

I prepared Myself with penance and prayer. I completed my preparation with victory over Satan. Oh, he clearly felt that the Victor had arisen, on seeing Me steadfast before the seduction of impurity, and strong in the face of hunger, pride, and avarice!

But I want you to contemplate Me in the part you deem inappropriate, and compare the Pure Jesus to the Pure Couple of the First Parents. In these, the Serpent's venom was able to act, because they wanted to accept him. And they did not want to endure the effort of rejecting him, since they had imprudently approached him.

I did not seek Satan. I was sought by him. When he found Me, I endured his being close by. It was a right and proper experience, so that I could be your merciful high priest, tested like you, not disdainful of you, and an example for you...

Why did Satan begin his Temptation with Impurity? Because this sin is the most widespread one. It is in every place and in every part of the world, at all social levels, and, unfortunately, in all conditions. It has many names. It is sometimes even covered with legitimacy. But it sullies legitimate marriage beds as well as the beds of prostitutes, and I will not speak about other considerations... Satan believed that with that means alone, he would be able to shatter the thought of redemption forever, by corrupting the irreplaceable Redeemer. Finally, he needed to make sure whether I was the Redeemer.

He had gotten a hunch that I was now in the world. He was looking for Me... For so many years he had been unable to part the veil enveloping the mystery of my Mother and Me. The manifestation at the Jordan had shaken him. But dread of Me made him still hesitate...

My steadfast bearing... told him who I was. Convinced about my nature, he persisted. In his first temptation the other three were already concealed, especially the last one. My eyes chilled him. My silence exasperated him. My serenity bewildered him. He felt he was up against a force which was impossible to bend. He sensed that the Pure One could only be nauseated at the dishonest fruit he was offering...

Tempted in all things and by everyone, I remained without sin. The Eternal High Priest, by my own will, I kept Myself innocent and immaculate... to serve the spirit alone...

What is there in Me that you do not have? And what did I do that you cannot do? I am speaking of sanctifying oneself to become perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect..."

(Jesus emphasizes the vital importance of our Guardian Angels, in times of temptation...)

"...They exist. And they are devoted, active, and wise: in loving, helping, guiding, and instructing your souls. The good companion never neglects his task, not even when man sins and provokes repugnance. But when man also lives in the grace of the Lord, employing this grace and serving with all his strength, then - just as is stated regarding Me after the temptation in the desert - 'the angels serve him.' Do you think that my Guardian Angel failed to fight along with Me against Satan in that hour? He truly fought! And when the victory had been won, he called his brothers to sustain the strength of the Victorious One..."

(And Azariah, Maria's Guardian Angel, says:)

"...One who is with God and his angels should not fear.

Satan, his servants, the world, and men, would like to frighten you, mortify you, and separate you from your mission: with threats, or with offers of immediate and tangible honors and benefits. Make the words of the sublime Tempted One your own. Reply to them: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from God. Begone, O Satan! I serve the Lord God, and no other.'

Soul of mine, fear not. Proceed. The Glory of the Heavens will satisfy you for every holy desire, and compensate you for every sorrow. Let us bless the Lord (Thanks be to God). Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit."
