

COLUMNISTS

Temptations can strengthen us

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 1:12-15. (R1) Genesis 9:8-15. (R2) 1 Peter 3:18-22.

Lent begins with the temptations of Jesus. Dostoyevsky in his master work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, made the Temptation scene a centerpiece. Ivan Karamazov calls the Temptation the most stupendous miracle on earth: the miracle of restraint.

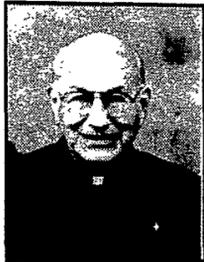
Suppose Jesus had yielded to the temptation. He would have been a very popular figure, not just with Satan, but with all Israel. Just imagine: stones turned to bread to feed the hungry, a spectacular descent from the Temple pinnacle as crowds gasped in amazement and awe, and political appeasement as the foundation of the kingdom program rather than righteousness and justice.

According to Dostoyevsky's view, Satan offered three easy means of inciting belief: a miracle, a mystery, and authority. Christ refused all three.

What is temptation? Temptation is an allurements, an attraction, an urge to do something against the will of God.

Temptations are not a sin. In fact, they are a good sign. You don't hunt a caught rabbit. If the devil already has you, he doesn't tempt you.

There are three steps in temptation. Nobody can want what he does not know, nor can one know what does not come through one of the five senses. Hence the first step in temptation is the suggestion,



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a stimulus from without, like a suggestive picture. The second step is the reaction, a pleasurable feeling stirred up by the outside suggestion that is so strong that it moves one vehemently (the name for emotion) toward the object of the temptation. The third step is the realization by the intellect, illumined by grace, that this emotion is either good to be followed or bad to be avoided. Up to this point, the temptation is still a temptation.

The fourth step is the decisive one; namely, the decision to surrender to the impulse or to repulse it, to snuff out the fire or to fan it into flame, to sin or to perform a virtuous act.

It is important to realize that sin is only in this last step, in the consent of the will, not in the feelings. You may experience all kinds of impure feelings, but if you do not consent to them, there is no sin, but virtue. St. Francis de Sales said, "*Sentire non est pec-*

catum sed consentire" — "To feel is not a sin, but to consent."

St. Catherine of Siena was attacked one time by terrible sins against purity. When the temptations passed, our Lord appeared to her. "O Lord," Catherine cried, "where were you when my heart was filled with such detestable thoughts?"

"These thoughts, these temptations," asked our Lord, "did they give you pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow?"

"Terrible sorrow, terrible pain," answered Catherine.

"Know, my daughter, you so suffered because I was present defending you. Never have I been closer to you."

But why temptation?

There are two kinds of temptation: seductive and probative. Seductive temptation is a solicitation to evil. God never so tempts man. "God tempts no one to evil" (Jas 1:13).

Probative temptation is a test of virtue permitted by God to purify the soul and prepare it for greater graces. God tries us with a little to see what we would do with a lot. So it happened to holy Job and the sterility of Elizabeth.

Satan, like an assassin, cuts to kill. God, like a good surgeon, cuts to cure. Sometimes he'll permit temptations:

To reveal to us our need for prayer and the sacraments. When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.

To give us an opportunity to do penance, for temptations are a cross.

To strengthen our wills, as swimming against the current makes the swimmer strong.

The trials of Tobit had all the above purposes (Tb 12:13).

"My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials" (Sirach 2:1).

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, February 17

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18;
Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday, February 18

Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, February 19

Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32

Thursday, February 20

Esther C:12-14, 16, 23-25;
Matthew 7:7-12

Friday, February 21

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

Saturday, February 22

1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19

Faulty translations can cause headaches

Q. We hope you can clear up some confusion about what our Holy Father said recently about evolution.

We have read that, according to the pope, many recent scientific discoveries lead us to realize that "the theory of evolution is more than a hypothesis."

However, two recent newspaper columns claim that this is a mistranslation, composed by certain "secularists" and promoted by some American Catholics. The real translation, they claim, is the one in the Vatican newspaper.

To be honest, the translation they say is right doesn't make much sense. Can you help? Where could we obtain a copy of the pope's talk?

A. On Oct. 22 of last year, Pope John Paul II presented a message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences concerning new scientific information on the theory of evolution and explained the church's position about that theory.

As you are aware, the theory of evolution proposes that, through many eons, our human bodies evolved from pre-existing living beings into their present



question corner

By FATHER JOHN DIETZEN

form.

I, too, have seen a number of writers who say much the same as the ones you read. They generally reflect a strong fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, especially the Genesis stories of creation.

At any rate, the information they present is grossly incomplete, often false; they obviously feel it is important for some reason to minimize what Pope John Paul said.

Shortly after the pope delivered his message, the English language edition of the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, quoted the Holy Father as saying that "new knowledge has led to the recognition of more than one hypothesis

in the theory of evolution."

A few days later the same newspaper's editor acknowledged its wrong translation and affirmed the correct translation, which you cite.

Forgive my quoting French for a moment, but it will help answer your question properly. In his message the pope said the following: "... *de nouvelles connaissances conduisent a reconnaitre dans la theorie de l'evolution plus qu'une hypothese.*" The normal English translation of that sentence, and the correct one according to *L'Osservatore Romano*, is "(N)ew knowledge leads to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis."

The pope goes on to say that the convergence of results in scientific work, conducted independently, "is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory."

No one familiar with our pope and his respect and love for science and scholarship will be surprised by his words.

At very least it proves, if proof were any longer needed, that the pope is not a fundamentalist when it comes to interpreting the Scriptures.

He is open to every help qualified scholars can give us to delve more deeply into the truth. As he reminds us elsewhere in this message, "We know, in fact, that truth cannot contradict truth."

The mistaken version of the text, which *L'Osservatore Romano* editors acknowledged and corrected, again proves how difficult, complicated and precarious is the task of translating documents from one language to another.

Very few papal messages originate in English. They need to be translated, a process which, whatever the language, is regularly open to misinterpretations and mistakes that need correction.

I'm happy you wish to read the whole document. It's always much safer to learn firsthand what was said than to hear others tell what they think was said.

The text of this message is available from Origins, CNS Documentary Service, 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington DC 20017-1100. Ask for the Dec. 5, 1996 issue.

Father Dietzen is pastor of Holy Trinity Church, 704 N. Main St., Bloomington, Ill. 61701. Questions may be addressed to him there.



Holy Sepulchre Cemetery
2461 Lake Avenue, Rochester, NY 14612
716-458-4110

Kids' Answers

from page 16

1. 7
2. 150
3. 4
4. 14
5. 12



Wednesday
February 19, 12:15 pm Mass

Guest Homilist
Fr. Michael Upson,

Church of the Immaculate Conception
How the Church of Rochester is ministering to the Black Community

Coffee hour in the rectory immediately following mass.

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