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March 10, 2019

Every week we sing at Mass, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.” Two years ago a teen here asked who were all the hosts and what parties they were having. Hosts means armies, but we might be confused why that would be the title we use for God. We rarely think of God as a warrior, but that is how he is described in Scripture. Even in today’s Psalm we hear him described with military language: as a fortress, who is the commander of the angels who guard us, who will guide us to trample down the dragon. The language of spiritual warfare that we heard in Ash Wednesday’s prayers, which referred to Lent as a spiritual military campaign, is Biblical. Christ is a true heir to David. He is a warrior king, but one who goes about it quite differently.

This is one way of understanding today’s Gospel passage. After 40 days of fasting, Scripture gives us the understatement of the year and tells us that Christ is hungry, and the devil invites him to use his power to serve his own needs, eating. Satan does not tempt Christ by saying, “If you are hungry, change these stones into bread.” He says, “If you are the Son of God...” Satan is not trying to tempt Christ’s hunger. It has to do with power. Satan wanted him to use his power to serve his own needs, to feed himself, instead of serving the mission given to him by God, to feed us. “Use your power for you, not for God.” Christ replies with Scripture, and while he does not finish the line here, “One does not live on bread alone,” the rest of it goes, “but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” It is a clear reference to listening to the will of God and doing it.

We are given three temptations. There might be more, but we are told he underwent every sort of temptation. Christ is going to win the final victory on Good Friday, and he shows us the way. We, too, are often tempted to give into sin, to miss the mark, but we can also be distracted by good things, like food. Lent is our own spiritual exercises where we practice asceticism, so that we can, when the time comes, have a will strong enough to resist temptation.

So here we are four days into Lent and maybe you’ve already been tempted to eat those Doritos you resolved not to eat, while watching an episode of Umbrella Academy on Netflix, which you resolved not to use. If so, just turn to God and say, “See, I cannot even do this. How could I ever avoid sin? Thank you for dying for me.” But what is it in us that so badly wants to be filled with all this stuff? Lent, a time of purification, is meant to show us that none of that satisfies the deepest hunger of our hearts. We want true food.

Maybe we are still enamoured of these worldly things, thinking they will satisfy. Maybe we think sin will satisfy! But we know this from the lives of the saints, who could reflect on both the depths of their earlier sins and the heights that eventually reached, that these things do not. For one, take the great Saint Augustine, who writes about all the things that obscured him from seeing God. There is a famous passage from his autobiography *The Confessions*, in which he recounts his journey from a half-pagan half-Catholic childhood, to his party years, to his academic pursuits, to his conversion. This famous passage has been turned into a famous praise and worship hymn by Matt Maher.

“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the

lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness.” Notice that these good things are given by God and when used in a properly ordered way show us God, but Augustine desired them apart from God. Thus, they were distractions and sinful.

It took something major to break through that he might see God. He was blinded by love of other things, and once he discovered the One who he truly desired he could say, “You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.” Saint Augustine then desired what truly satisfied.

Lent is a battle against the weakness of human flesh, and it marks out the battle Christ fought, ending with triumphantly entering into Jerusalem, being crowned and enthroned on the cross, and rising. We also have been saved, not just for Heaven, but our Earthly lives have been redeemed, so Lent is a time of spiritual discipline to purify all that gets in the way of our Christ’s spiritual victory in our own life.