

First Sunday of Lent

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

“Master your hunger, and you master your life.”

Today’s Readings, from the Book of Genesis, the Letter to the Romans, and the Gospel of Matthew, present us with a powerful, contrasting perspectives: the hunger for the world and the hunger for God.

In the Book of Genesis, God created man from the dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life into him. However, human beings were created not to merely eat, possess, and enjoy; but to live in communion with God and with others. Into this perfect setting, the crafty serpent enters the scene to tilt the balance. Upon deeper reflection, the serpent’s temptation was not just about the fruit; it was about *hunger* — a craving to *be like God*, without God!

The course of action that entraps one into a temptation follows the sequence undertaken by the serpent: First, doubt is planted. Then, desire. Desire then leads to disobedience. In this scenario, *Sin* did not appear as something ugly; it came as and took the form of something attractive, tagged with excuses, rationalization, and justifications such as: “It’s not a big problem.” or “Everyone does it.” That is how worldly hunger begins — the hunger for power, pleasure, recognition, possession: and when that hunger encroaches, dominates, and overwhelms a person; spiritual life begins to fade.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, explains that through one man, Adam, sin entered the world; and through sin, death. But through one man, Christ, righteousness and life came to all. Where Adam gave in to worldly hunger, Christ overcame it.



In the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus was in the wilderness, He felt hunger after forty days of fasting. It is at His weakest point that the Tempter comes to visit Jesus. Notice the sequence and pattern of the temptations:

The First: “Turn these stones into bread.” To satisfy physical hunger — bodily pleasures.

The Second: “Throw yourself down.” The hunger for fame, recognition, and spectacular display.

The Third: “All these kingdoms I will give you.” The hunger for power, possession, and control.

These are the same temptations that humanity still faces: the uncontrollable desire for money, pleasure, technology, status, and positions that finally lead to addictions. The world tells us: satisfy every craving immediately! But Jesus shows us another way: He refuses to compromise. He answers each temptation with the Word of God, backed by His Spiritual convictions.

Where Adam grasped, Jesus trusted.

Where Adam doubted, Jesus obeyed.

Where Adam fell, Jesus stood firm.

St. Paul also reminds us, in the Epistle to the Galatians, about the dangerous “works of the flesh” — fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. These are signs of worldly hunger ruling the heart. He also speaks of the “fruit of the Spirit” — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These will grow only when our hunger shifts from the world to focus on God.

My dear friends, the problem is not the *hunger* itself. Hunger and to be hungry is natural. The question is: What are we hungry for?

If we hunger only for the world, we become slaves to it.

If we hunger for God, we become free.

The other result of temptation is its normalization. When we, and society, begin to normalize sin, when excuses replace conscience, and when morality is compromised, that is the trap of the tempter. The first thing the evil one attacks is our values. Once we compromise, we slowly lose spiritual strength. Every small compromise is like manure, fertilising the seeds of sin.

Jesus teaches us that true power comes not from satisfying every single craving, but from mastering them. Those who overcome the hunger of the world become spiritually powerful people. Lent is an invitation to redirect our hunger. Fasting is not just about food; it is about discipline: training the heart. Prayer is not just words; it is feeding the soul. Charity is not just giving; it is breaking bonds of attachment.

Adam stretched his hand toward the forbidden tree. Jesus stretched His hands on the Cross. Through Adam came death; through Christ came life.

Let us ask for the grace to cultivate Spiritual Hunger — a hunger for God’s Word, for holiness, and for righteousness. It is only when God becomes our deepest desire will the cravings of the world lose their power over us.

May we overcome the hunger for the world by developing a greater hunger for God. Let us keep in mind: “The greatest victory is not over the world, but over the hunger for it.”