Columns
Spirituality



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The Scripture story of the temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11) only makes sense if we understand it from his experience of baptism — of knowing and experiencing himself as a child of God, wrapped in God's Spirit in such a way that his life is driven by this relationship that led him to live as he did.

The Gospels were addressed to the first Christians, who experienced the difficulties of following the Way both internally and as part of the society in which they lived. The Gospels tried — through the narrative of the temptations of Jesus — to make them understand that the path of discipleship was not an easy one.

Jesus told Nicodemus that *one must be reborn of water and the Spirit* (John 3:5) in order to live from the personal experience of knowing and feeling oneself to be a child of God with all the consequences.

The first thing that arises after a foundational experience is the question: What do I do now? What am I invited to live? What do I have to do?

Most of us who read these comments have already gone through this experience and perhaps through many others that have been "sifting" us, helping us to stay with what is essential and to let go of everything that does not lead us to anything. But if we are still on the way and we have not arrived, temptations continue to harass us from all sides.

And what temptations do I experience today?

Jesus, after having gone without food for 40 days, felt hungry ... and who wouldn't! There would be so much to say about this first temptation: *If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.* Jesus felt the temptation, like each one of us, to use his power for his own benefit, or to dedicate his existence to soothing the primary needs of the neediest, the most oppressed people. How different everything would have been if he had dedicated himself to the needy without that prophetic dimension that impelled him to denounce, as well as to announce that God did not agree with the injustice promulgated by both the Roman and the religious powers.

Our temptation is to translate the actions of Jesus into what seems to us to be the most necessary, passing everything through our own criteria. In other words, to make a god to suit us, who justifies our actions and applauds our decisions.

To answer Satan, Jesus refers to the passage in Deuteronomy 8:3, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.* Of course, without the basic needs covered, a person cannot consider anything else, but our needs go beyond the material, and to deny them to ourselves or to others is to attack our own identity.

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Jesus lets the Word speak to his life; he does not accommodate the Word to what is convenient for him. And I return with this to the need for a personal but accompanied experience.

We do not realize it and we fall into what we criticize in others.

How about an experience of letting ourselves be guided by the Spirit who speaks to us and nourishes us through the Word, accompanied by the community? We need an active silence that transforms us from within, where reasoning and arguments do not enter, but where we allow ourselves to be transformed.

Fasting from information, from criticism, from activism, from doing things my way: This will help me let myself be directed, will bring me closer to the experience of Jesus of Nazareth — listening from within to God's plan and living not as I see fit but as befits a child of God.

Satan who tempts me, who justifies my positions and actions, who encourages me to continue as I am, is not a character who speaks to me from the outside; he is my own ego.

We are hungry for an authentic spirituality. It is clear that all formation, all intellectual knowledge is essential, but without a life guided by the Spirit it can be counterproductive. Since it is "fashionable" to talk about spirituality instead of religion, we must be careful not to fall into a superficiality that leaves us even hungrier.

We are prone to follow "gurus," to listen to what "the masters" tell us and to mix our spiritual foods as we please. Spirituality is our essence; it is not something external to me that I consume according to my need, but the response with a lifestyle that calls to me from within.

Authentic spirituality is nourished not only by silence and dialogue but also by action. Each of these aspects propels us to the other. She makes us more humble, aware of our reality, and helps us to accept ourselves while accepting the complementarity of others.

She gives us new eyes with which to see reality and keeps hope alive in the midst of contradictions. She is the only way to stay afloat in a time of so much turbulence. She is not given to us; we go out to look for her and she comes to meet us.

Authentic spirituality does not touch one aspect of our reality but all of them; she envelops everything, transforms everything, in us and in our connections with everything and everyone. She is the best companion on the path or, rather, she herself is the path.