



“ Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God ”

THIS WEEK'S GOSPEL

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him: 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God' he said 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you

in his angels' charge and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

AKBAR'S* STORY

Akbar, one of our refugee friends, fled his home country where he faced persecution and discrimination from a corrupt government:*

Akbar grew up in a loving home. He has fond memories of life in his country as a boy: "When I was small as a boy, it was lovely country. Everything was fine, food was good, weather was good. And there was not so much problem financial [or] any kind of social problems. I have loving parents, one sister, friends. Everybody was honest. No rush hours. No tension. No depression. No any kind of pressure or anything. Life was good. Very good."

Despite plenty of ambition and success, Akbar and his community were victims of ethnic discrimination: "We belong to ethnic minority and our forefathers, we migrated. [We were] highly educated and very able people. We develop [the] whole city like infrastructures, industry, port, international airport and seventy percent of revenue from [our country]."

Being passionate about biology, Akbar had dreams of becoming a doctor. He was prevented from doing so, despite his high grades, because of a quota system.





Instead, he became a scientist who worked in a laboratory testing patients' samples: "I was always interested in living things. For example, I pass my Bachelor exam like 65% first Division, I wasn't able to get admission in Medical College, I wanted to be a doctor and somebody who's very, very from North he was given my seat to him but he was even having second grades like 55% because of [a] quota system."

His country was being ruled by people who, Akbar says, were focused on money and power more than improving the lives of their citizens:

"[Since the birth of our country] it was ruled by like a Mafia, corrupt people, military all the time. Then they did not really care about the people. They were just happy with to increase their bank balance. Millions of pounds abroad UK, Switzerland but they did not spend so much money as deserved for their people. The ruling parties are very, very ultra rich. They are very powerful. It's about the money, it's about power. Money gives you power, you know."

“The ruling parties are very, very ultra rich. It's about the money, it's about power.”

Responding to this situation and the discrimination they faced, his community started a political party to defend their rights, in which Akbar became very active. This came at a time when his party was facing increasing pressure:

"But after some time, [...] problem arises. There was a lot of uprising and suddenly whole [country] turn against us, [saying] we are traitor. [A] military operation was launched against us. [T]here was a lot of fake cases booked against me. I was ready to face these cases but suddenly government changed its policy and start extrajudicial killing. They said they go to houses, they arrest somebody and on the way to jail, they just suddenly killed them and they declared that it was an encounter. So in this situation I went underground to save my life. There was no other way."

*To protect his identity, this is not his real name.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

As we begin this Lenten season, we imitate Jesus' journey into the wilderness to fast. This marked His time in preparation for the beginning of His ministry. What things might I need to set aside to allow me to focus my attention more fully on God this Lent?



In the Gospel, the devil tempts Jesus with the power and wealth offered by the world. In Akbar's story, we hear of how his country was ruled by those who had fallen for the charms of this wealth and power, with damaging consequences for those they governed. What place does power and wealth have in my own life and those around me? Perhaps it is subtle: a focus on status, or attachment to possessions. Where might God be inviting me to set these concerns to one side and work instead for justice?



Jesus was provoked and assailed by the devil in the desert. We hear how Akbar and his community were on the receiving end of terrible oppression and persecution. What do I do when I am forced to endure hardship in my life at the hands of others? How do I respond?



I offer up a prayer in my own words based on what God has revealed to me during this prayerful reflection.