

Season of Septuagesima

February 17, 2019

“So run that you may obtain the prize.” 1 Cor 9:24

The readings in the office of Matins today starts with Genesis and the beginning of creation. From that beginning it will proceed through the Fall, and as Lent and Easter approach, to the drama of the Passion and death of our Lord and His glorious resurrection. Through the liturgy, we will go on this long journey from creation to the more wonderful redemption. Since we are on a journey with a clear destination, the Church has us begin today with a race as described in St. Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians. The Stational Church on this day is St. Laurence Outside the Walls, a considerable distance from the center of Rome. Cardinal Schuster points out in his *Liber Sacramentorum* that this distant station is used to help represent the race that we must all under go on our journey to heaven.

St. Paul reminds the Corinthians of their famous games and how they train for long hours to try and win the prize. The great effort they put into the training shows how they value the prize. He works from this corruptible prize to the incorruptible one, from the known to the less known. This same analogy still applies today; we see many striving after various awards, prizes and honors in sports, school and work. Sports is certainly a good recreation and can be wholesome for us, but the real prize we should be seeking, even while competing in sports or busy at work or home, is the prize of eternal life. There are three chief enemies that we have to do battle against in order to obtain the prize, and these three are the devil, the world and the flesh.

Let us consider the devil first. The devil was an angel created by God in innocence but immediately subjected to a trial as were all the angels, and one third of them fell. St. Peter says in speaking of this judgement “God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments to be reserved unto judgement”. (2 Peter 2:4) He speaks of what happened to the angels to warn us of what could happen to us if we are unfaithful. The fallen angels are suffering the pain of loss and of fire forever because of their choice. Now they are occupied in cursing and blaspheming God. But they are also occupied in tempting men to sin through hatred of God, envy of man and enmity to all that is good. The devil will be present at the final judgement to accuse souls before God. Frightening? Indeed, but God is more powerful and can give us the grace to conquer.

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