

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – (2/3/08)

The Pastor's Corner will resume on **Feb. 10.**

First Sunday of Lent – (2/10/08)

It seems very fitting that at the beginning of Lent we hear the basic story of temptation, beginning at creation and up to the time of Jesus. Temptation is what draws us away from God. We live indeed to determine good from evil, and to do good and avoid evil. Satan of course doesn't want to make it easy for us. You notice how conniving he is with Adam and Eve, changes the truth subtly and lies very easily. But temptation isn't what leads to sin, it is our inability to recognize the truth of temptation. "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom" (Gen. 3:5). Eve failed to see the truth because her desires dimmed her vision.

That really is the essence of sin for most people. It's not as if we deliberately set out to sin, but it is our failure to recognize the truth of any temptation and our greater desire for something other than the truth. For example, abortion is the manifestation of our desire for something other than the truth. The truth is that abortion is the killing of a human life, which starts at conception. But our desire to be freed from responsibility for our human sexuality leads us to accept the deadly sin of abortion. Instead of valuing all human life as a gift from God, we choose to ignore the life in the womb because we don't want another child. Or, and this is Satan at his best, we are convinced that the sacrifice of the fetus through stem cell research is necessary for the good of many, offering possible cures for many devastating diseases! And so we make ourselves gods with the power of life and death over others. We turn away from God.

Let us use this Lent as an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to God and His teachings. Let us ask for the grace to recognize temptation, and the strength to overcome it to serve the Lord with our whole heart, mind and being. Jesus gives us the grace to overcome evil and temptation. Let us accept that grace and reflect Christ's light in our lives for all to see! Amen!

Second Sunday of Lent – (2/17/08)

One of my favorite prayers is to ask God to handle my problems so that I don't have to! Wouldn't that be great? But the reality is that each of us must do the preparation work for growing ourselves. It is God, of course, who inspires us to want to change so that we grow more loving, and it is God who strengthens us for the work. But we must each do the work of changing by facing our darkneses and using the light of Christ to guide us. It would certainly be nice to stay up on the mountaintop of the Transfiguration with Peter, James and John. But we, like them, have to follow Jesus down the mountain to face the troubles of life.

Jesus will often give us moments of enlightenment and joy to strengthen us for our faith journey. These can be like the disciples' joy on the mountaintop. But then the Lord wants us to come down off the mountain and work with His grace to change our hearts and to change the world. It is indeed refreshing to know that we don't have to face all our troubles by ourselves. God will always be with us. Having been blessed by the Lord, we are asked to be a blessing to others, just as God informed Abram. May this Lenten journey bring us closer to our Loving Master and help us to help others to see His light. Amen!

Third Sunday of Lent – (2/24/08)

Water is absolutely essential to life and extremely precious in the arid Middle East. The Samaritan woman wanted to know how to procure this “living water” that would end her physical thirst, but Jesus was offering a cure for her spiritual thirst, her thirst for love. She had five husbands, and was living with a man not her husband. Likewise, our culture is spiritually thirsty as evidenced by our many and broken relationships, our materialism, and our grasping at power to control our lives and the lives of others. We are exhausted, and like the Samaritan Woman in need of refreshment too.

After talking with Jesus, the Samaritan woman left her jug behind and ran to share her news with the townspeople. What changed this sinner shunned by others, seeking water alone in the heat of the day, into a Proclaimer of the Word?

She received what was missing, love. We can surmise from Romans, the love of God was poured into her heart through the Holy Spirit, the “living water” essential for the spiritual life, who had been given to her by Jesus due to her faith. Through a single conversation, Jesus brought the Samaritan woman to faith, resulting in a new life for herself and the townsfolk.

May our faith increase as we listen to the Word this Lent so that we too may receive this refreshment as well!