

1st Sunday of Lent
March 6, 2022
“A Lent of Personal Honesty”

Dt 26:4-10
Rom 10:8-13
Lk 4:1-13

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Deep down, most Americans would like two things. They would like a life of abundance – and they would like a life without pain. Abundance means a lifestyle full of material things and all the pleasures that go with them. And a painless life means freedom from all the many kinds of suffering or impairment that come with the human condition.

However, there are many who want much more. They want riches, power, and control. They want to be recognized and even envied for what they possess and have accomplished. And sadly, today, many have sold their souls – their personal spiritual integrity – for what will never really satisfy them. Because our deepest need and longing can be fulfilled only by God, Himself!

God must be the center of our lives and hearts. This is true no matter who we are, where we live, or what we possess. If God is our center and touchstone, then everything else will fall into place for us – However, not necessarily in this life – in the here and now – but in the hereafter!

There is no pleasure, no wealth, no power, no recognition that can ever substitute for God – and for what God can be for us. But to believe this and act upon it requires the relationship of faith. And such a relationship is built upon coming to know Jesus. It comes from taking to heart his words and life as recorded in the Gospels.

After Jesus was revealed at the Jordan, he was led into the desert wilderness by the Holy Spirit. There he fasted and prayed. But he was also tempted by the devil.

He was tempted to satisfy his hunger by working a miracle to serve himself. He was shown all the earthly riches, power, and glory that anyone could ever want, but they would be his, only in exchange for his soul. He was given the opportunity to defy the laws of nature and become a superstar with a marvelous future!

Nevertheless, Jesus rejected them all. He refused to be self-serving – He refused to sell his soul – He refused to reject God’s plan for him which would include great suffering, rejection, and the worst death imaginable! Jesus chose a life of integrity – A way that accepted all that life on this planet entails – And he did so, in faith. He trusted that the Father would be with him no matter what would lie ahead.

Our problem, today, is that so many are focused upon themselves. They focus on striving for the “good life” – and with avoiding pain at any cost. So many must always have more than what they really need. They are so immersed in what pleases them and satisfies them that they fail to look outward – or into their own souls. Hundreds of millions have made the cell phone their god – for it is at the center of all that they do. They have no time, space, or place to listen for the voice of God – and what He would have them do with their lives!

It is fortunate that we have begun our annual journey of Lent for the next several weeks. Lent is our opportunity to go into the desert with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is a time to look at the temptations, ancient and new – that the devil uses to try to ensnare us.

There are many questions we can ask ourselves. What are the pleasures to which we are attached? Are they good? Are they moral? Or are they self-serving and addictive? How deep is our attachment to material things? How do we exercise our power and control over the lives of others? How do we behave toward family members – spouse, children, parents – friends, co-workers, and staff? Do we rejoice in the blessings and good fortune of others – or are we diminished because we are not the center of attraction? Are we truly grateful for all that God has given us? Do we show this gratitude by sharing our wealth and blessings with others? Do we show real generosity to all the less fortunate among us and throughout the world? Do we deprive ourselves, so that they can at least have something to live on? What is our attitude toward the homeless whom we encounter so often in our city?

Brothers and Sisters, these are tough questions. Certainly, they aren’t the only questions we might ask ourselves. St. Paul teaches us that the faith in our hearts must be joined to our words – to our profession of belief. And our words must describe the way we have chosen to live. Thus, we must live for others and for God if we would follow Jesus and be our best selves!

So let us pray, today, for God’s power and grace in our hearts and lives. May we be led by the Holy Spirit during these 40 days. And may we stand with Jesus – as we face the temptations of Satan and the unvarnished truth about ourselves!

Amen.

March 6, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra