

First Sunday of Lent – Reflection by Father Dave

Why did God take the people of Israel on a 40 year journey through the wilderness instead of taking the short cut to Canaan? The answer lies in the behavior of the people: they longed for the slavery of Egypt; they yearned for the material comforts of their slavery- better food, better water, better this, better that. And so they grumbled against Moses and in grumbling against him they were really grumbling against God. They were not putting their trust in Him. And while on the journey, as God provided for them, instead of being grateful for the daily manna that He sent to them, they grumbled. They would rather exchange their new-found freedom for “the fleshpots of Egypt”/ their freedom for a pot of stew. The wilderness, not Egypt, proved to be the real battleground for a people called to freedom but accustomed to slavery. The Pharaoh and his charioteers could be conquered in a matter of days, but the enemy within the hearts and minds of God’s people is a more formidable foe.

And so it is for us. What or who is the real foe that we face each day and must battle? As we begin this holy and penitential season of Lent, what demons should we be facing off? Is it fear, pride, or love of comfort that prevents us from experiencing the freedom and fullness of God’s love? What am I willing to trade for the freedom our God offers to us? What bad habits enslave me? What thoughts undermine my faith? Like the Jewish people, we need to take the long road through the desert of Lent. Relying on God’s guidance and sustenance, we battle the enemy within. It is on this interior battleground that we experience most fully our need for God, the source of all love and peace.

Looking at the Gospel for this weekend - we may want to focus on the temptation to have things “our way.” This was the temptation the devil gave to Jesus – as we hear in today’s Gospel – that Jesus do things His own way without worry of doing things God’s way. Deuteronomy means “second law.” The first law, the law given on Mount Sinai, is repeated in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, interpreted and expanded. What we read today could be called the final instruction Moses gives his people at the end of their wandering in the desert before they cross into Canaan, the Promised Land. Our passage recalls Jacob, “the wandering Aramean,” (Jacob is also called “Israel”, the name that we use to describe the “Chosen People”.) Jacob lived in Canaan but moved his family to Egypt in a time of famine. There, “Israel” became enslaved. We listen today as Israel prepares to reenter Canaan. Moses’ main words of wisdom are to remember that God is the One who guided and delivered Israel, and that Israel must remember how much it owes to God. The Israelites were to remember God’s deliverance by placing their “first fruits” in a basket in front of the altar. The “first fruits” were a tithe, 10 percent of the harvest. This tithe is to remind ourselves that all things are God’s and are given to us for our use.

Throughout Lent we are called to remember our relationship with God. We are called to make a sacrifice that helps us to remember what God has first given to us. The one thing the temptations given to Jesus by the devil have in common is the urging for Jesus to trust only in Himself, not in the Father, that he doesn’t “owe” the Father anything.

Jesus goes to the desert to fully explore His relationship with His Father. The temptations did not come one after the other, instead they came throughout the 40 days. And there were, most likely, more than the three we read about in the Gospel passage. Luke also tells us that Jesus ate nothing during those days. Deprivation focuses an individual. Near starvation would force a person to forget everything else for the sake of food. The devil tempts. J

As we move through this holy season, try to create a space for prayer, a small “desert”, in your home. Use this place of prayer throughout Lent. Here, with God’s help, you can confront the thoughts, the feelings, the fears, and the temptations that compromise your freedom. Pick a quiet corner of your homes for your prayer place and furnish it with a Bible, a cross, prayer book, an icon or other religious picture, and maybe a candle. Bless your prayer space and use it throughout the Lenten season, confident that the God Who calls us to freedom will nourish and guide us on the way.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace

BULLETIN REFLECTION

by Father Rody

MARCH 06 2022...

1ST SUN LENT YR C...LK 4, 1-13

Chapter 4 of Luke is divided into two parts; verses 1-13 The temptation of Jesus and verses 14 ff. The beginning of the Galilean Ministry. In theology, LK 4, 1-13 is described as THE PREPARATORY STAGE of Jesus Christ before plunging into the real world of work (what the Father wants Him to do). In layman's term it is called schooling, apprenticeship or internship...yoga may call it fine tuning or being coordinated.

We reflect on the term 'preparatory stage' with a question for what is it?

MT 22, 21...At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

ACTS 22, 27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes," he answered. **28** The commander replied, "I acquired this citizenship for a large sum of money." **Paul said, "But I was born one."** **29** At once those who were going to interrogate him backed away from him, and the commander became alarmed when he realized that he was a Roman citizen and that he had had him bound.

PHILIPPIANS 3, 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

MT 6, 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal.

MT 22...each individual belongs to at least two communities, we need to accept that. Each community is asking us to do something appropriate to it (government=pay your tax...church=observance of holy days of obligation).

ACTS 22, states 'I am citizen of this country.' Paul's citizenship was natural-in born but the commander was acquired.

PHILIPPIANS 3...speaks about another citizenship not on earth but in

heaven. To earn this citizenship is through a Savior, Jesus Christ.

MT 6...the things we need to do here on earth just so we would merit the heavenly citizenship.

THUS, earth is our preparatory stage to the real world called heaven. By way of analogy, before the athletes compete for the Olympics the gyms/courts are their preparatory stage. Just like what the Diocese of Greensburg did to us, August-September 2019 we were under orientation and October 2019 we were sent to our assignments. During this stage we are asked to do the right things (just like what Jesus did on today's gospel reading)...Corporal works of mercy (Mt. 25, 31-46) are the things worthy of putting into praxis while we are still in our preparatory stage and such will also be used to gauge our future locus.

Jesus Christ passed the orientation program and now He is so ready to proceed on the things that His Father wants Him to do.