

1st Sunday of Lent Year A
Christ the Good Shepherd, OCC
Fr. Harry Posner
March 1, 2020

My friends, welcome to Lent. This is a season for us to polish our internal compass as we journey with Christ. It is a time for us to slow down and take an inventory of where we are compared to where we want to be in our relationship with Christ. Too often I hear from people that they don't know how to pray. Prayer is simply sitting with God. It is not about reciting long prayers or using poetic words. Prayer is about spending quiet time, quality time, with God. Spending a few minutes or even an hour in quiet stillness, in the midst of our busy lives, is prayer at its finest.

In our gospel today, we find Jesus ready to begin his public ministry. Jesus is aware that he has a difficult journey ahead. Jesus is unsure of how his ministry, his life, and his call will unfold. So, he turns to prayer. He goes off into solitude to be alone with God. He takes time to reflect upon life's direction, and to pray for strength and guidance.

According to our gospel reading, Jesus is tempted by three things:

- hunger
- power
- recognition

Those are the same things that also tempt most of us. I am sure these were areas that Jesus struggled with throughout his lifetime, where he was tempted to compromise his ministry by taking the easy route. Yet Jesus was able to rise above his temptations because he was keenly aware of the importance of having a relationship with God. Jesus took the time to pray and reflect, to spend quality time with the Almighty.

So, when Jesus went off into the desert, the temptations were real, and as we all know from personal experience, sometimes sin is hard to resist. But Jesus knew that the solution to life's problems was not going to be solved the easy way. Jesus knew deep down that his calling was to be a loving servant. Rather than claiming a crown of gold, he opted to pick up the cross and to wear a crown of thorns.

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When Jesus spent time alone in the desert, his faith was strengthened, he found the courage to overcome temptation and to continue moving forward with purpose and conviction. It can be the same for us. Spend five or fifteen minutes, or an hour if you can, in prayer every day. Make room for God in your busy lives. Use the black Lenten books as a primer. The closer we move to God, the stronger our faith becomes, which in turn helps move us further outside the reaches of temptation. That is the foundation of repentance and from there we find the strength to fast and to do good works.

My challenge to you during this Lenten season is to do something positive to nourish your faith. Join the book club and learn about a modern-day prophet, Dorothy Day. Try doing something special for God that will strengthen your prayer life. By spending time in prayer, like Jesus, we too can change our lives.

In our first reading today, we heard the story of creation. God formed us out of the clay of the earth and gave us life by breathing life into us. God created us with loving hands and gave us life by breathing breath into us. No matter how often we turn away, no matter how often we fail to do the right thing, God is there with open arms to welcome us home. My friends, salvation is already ours. Jesus paid the price; he accepted the cross so that we didn't have to carry it ourselves. The only thing God asks of us is threefold:

- Love God
- Love one another
- Love ourselves

In so doing, we will live lives worthy of our calling.

As we approach this altar today to be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, ask Jesus to give you the strength and the courage to avoid the easy path and truly allow the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and actions so that we can become more loving and faithful companions of Jesus not only to the cross, but also to the joy of the resurrection.

Can I hear an amen?