

Homily Sample: First Sunday of Lent

“The priest shall receive the basket from you and shall set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God.” (Deuteronomy 26:4) What’s in the basket? It is to be filled with the first fruits of the first harvest in the Promise Land. After 40 years of subsistence living—now they would harvest food for a life-time of feasting. If there would ever be a time for God’s people to exude gratitude, it would be at the first harvest in the land of milk in honey.

Right here-during the offertory-the priest receives the basket and sets it in front of the altar of the Lord, as if we are re-enacting this scene from the book of Deuteronomy. When the basket is brought to this altar, we make an act of faith in us. We trust that our gratitude is born of sacrifice and in right proportion to the blessings we have received. If our gratitude falls short of sacrifice and we have slighted God by keeping too much for ourselves, then we have been tempted by the devil in the desert of our world.

Today is the First Sunday of Lent. Lent is a time for us to accompany Jesus to the desert where he can heal and strengthen us. Today is also Safe Haven Sunday, a time to face the reality that our lives are filled with threats to faith and family, threats that can be mitigated and conquered by allowing Jesus to shape our hearts and to fill us with the gratitude that accompanies sacrifice.

Safe Haven Sunday begs us to answer this question: Is your home a safe haven for your children and grandchildren? For all who cross the threshold of your front door? How many of us would leave our children on the roof of the house and hope for the best—not to mention the parapet of the temple? It would be foolish to teach them risky behavior that may end in their harm. If we give children devices that have access to the internet—unsupervised, unfiltered and with no accountability—we are falling short of our promise to care for them and to keep them safe. Our homes become deserts of danger and temptation rather than the safe haven that nourishes, encourages and protects them.

If your child is like the average child and if they are between the ages of 8-12 they are spending 6 hours a day using digital devices; 41% of that time is on a mobile device.

These devices are amazing tools but also dangerous playgrounds. We would not set children on the peak of 200 foot tall temple with no safety rails, nor can we allow a digital world to have unrestricted access to them, to hijack their sexual development and pervert the beauty of our God-given sexuality.

Consider again the basket by which we offer to God a thanksgiving sacrifice of the fruits of our labor. Children are a gift from God. We owe them safe homes and a plan to keep them safe online and in the real world.

As the offering is brought forward today, we trust that we offer to God gratitude in proportion to the blessings we have received. We trust that we will protect the purity of God's greatest blessings, the children entrusted to our care.

1. Chris McKenna, "Apps and internet doorways: What parents need to know," Covenant Eyes, June 10, 2016. Accessed November 5, 2018, from <https://www.covenanteyes.com/2016/06/10/apps-and-internetdoorways-what-parents-need-to-know/>

Safe Haven Sunday Homily Video Year 2

<https://vimeo.com/299435046/5400a5511d>