

The Paper Pulpit

(Reflections from the Pastor)

1st Sunday in Lent

Scripture readings: This is the first week in Lent and each year we read the gospel of our Lord Jesus being tempted in the desert by the devil. In the first temptation, the devil challenges our Lord to turn a stone into a loaf of bread to appease his hunger. But our Lord did not come to save himself; he came to save others. This fact reaches its culmination on the cross when the crowd challenges him to come down from the cross and to save himself and he would not. And even though we are not tempted by the devil to change stones into bread, we are challenged on a daily basis to think first of others and not of ourselves. We, too, are challenged to turn the stones of anger and hatred into the bread of compassion, nourishment and love. We too must be able to see, through the eyes of love, beyond the laborer's hatred of others to its source in his own disappointment with himself.

In the second temptation, our Lord was tempted by the devil to use his power for his own glory. But Jesus did not come to achieve glory for himself, but by his actions, to give glory to the Father who was the source of his power. How many times in our own lives are we tempted to use our own gifts for our own glory instead of using them to give glory to God who has so graciously bestowed those gifts upon us? In my own life, I continue to be amazed at how the Lord has blessed me with this gift of preaching but I constantly have to be aware that the gift is not mine but is mine to use to further the work of the Spirit in this world. And I am always so humbled to be so blessed and often wonder "Why me?" We do not know the reasons why we have been chosen to accomplish God's will in our lives. We are called only to be grateful for those gifts and use them "for the greater glory of God".

And this brings us to the third temptation, in which the devil challenges our Lord to throw himself down from the temple and let the angels save him. How often in our own lives do we find ourselves wanting to force God's hand to do our will and not his? How often do we find it so difficult to accept God's will in our lives and yet that is what we are called to do, just as our Lord did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

So, as we begin this Lenten journey, we are called to face our temptations in the same way that Jesus faced his: 1) by focusing on the needs of others and not on ourselves, 2) by using our gifts and talents for the greater glory of God and not of ourselves, and 3) by yielding our will to the will of the Father with the words that Christ himself used: "Father, not my will but yours be done".

Liturgical: This past Wednesday we began the holy season of Lent. Much of my preaching this Lent will focus on going to the desert to take time to pray and look into our souls through the cross of Christ, the Word of God and the water of our baptism. As we look into our soul, we will be guided by the Holy Spirit through the writings of St. Paul and the suggestions of what St. Paul would address if he wrote a letter to us titled, "A Letter of St. Paul to the Maximilian's."

To keep the penitential theme during Lent, there is no opening song. We will process in silence to the tolling of bells. The congregation is asked to kneel. We also invite you to exit the church in silence after the final prayer and blessing. There is no Gloria or Alleluia. We'll chant the Greek Kyrie (penitential rite) and chant the Latin Sanctus (Holy Holy) and Agnus Dei (Lamb of God).

Lenten Services:

Mass followed by the Stations of the Cross every Friday morning.

Stations of the Cross Sunday evenings March 9th, 23rd and April 13th at 6:30 PM.

Eucharistic Adoration every Sunday from 6:30 to 7:30.

Communal Penance Service on Tuesday, April 1st.

Individual confessions will be heard Saturdays from 11:00 AM until all are heard and from 6:00 to 6:45 PM.

Parish Retreat: Our parish retreat will be held Saturday, March 29th through Wednesday, April 2nd. Our Lenten retreat director is Fr. Patrick Foley. Fr. Foley was ordained in 1973, and has served in a variety of settings (parish and campus ministry, administration, high school and college teacher). From early on he has been involved with directing retreats, parish missions, days of recollection, and similar events. Since 1995 these have been the focus of his ministry. He is typically "on the road" some forty or more weeks every year, visiting dioceses, religious communities and parishes across the country. When he is not traveling, he is writing to reflect further upon the themes of spiritual formation and Christian life in our times.

In addition to degrees in philosophy and theology, Fr. Foley earned an M.A. in speech and drama from The Catholic University of America, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in formative spirituality from Duquesne University. This wonderful education is one of his many gifts with which God has blessed him, and which he is privileged to be able to bring to this ministry.

I highly recommend your family attend our parish retreat and at least one of our Lenten Services.

Diocesan Annual Appeal: Thank you to those who already made their pledge. There is no pledge too big or too small. In order to help us make our goal, three donors will pay up to a total of \$4,500 if they are matched by new dollars received from now until the end of March. So \$50 becomes \$100, \$100 becomes \$200, \$500 becomes \$1,000 and so on up to a combined total of \$9,000 which will put us over our goal. This includes new donations as well as those who already made their pledge and wish to make an additional pledge. Appeal forms are attached to the bulletin this week for your convenience. Please bring the completed form and check made out to St. Maximilian Kolbe by the end of March to the parish.

In Christ, Fr. Jim Trempe