

1st Sunday Lent Year (C)

A bartender notices that every evening, without fail, one of his regulars orders three beers. After several weeks of watching this every night the bartender asks the man why he always drinks the three beers. The man says, "I have two brothers who have moved away to different countries. We promised each other that we would always order an extra two beers whenever we drank as a way of keeping up the family bond."

Several weeks later, noticing that the man only ordered two beers, the bartender said, "Please accept my condolences on the death of one of your brothers. You know, the two beers and all..." The man replied, "Nah, my brothers are just fine... It's just that I decided to give up drinking for Lent."

The gospel on this First Sunday in Lent helps us to set our direction for our Lenten journey

Sometimes we like to give up stuff...sometimes we try to do extra stuff...all in our own way trying to model...Christ in the desert

And so for each of us, this story of the temptation of Jesus in the desert is our story too.

And the season of Lent for us.... even on some small level becomes a time to reflect on what gets under our own skin ..where our weak spots are .

At some time in our lives, every one of us has been tempted to do something which we had severe reservations about, something which didn't seem quite right, but in spite of all the wiser, inner voices.....still found very hard to resist.

And the same was true with Jesus ...No sooner was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan than he was led by the Spirit into the desert, where he was tempted by Satan.

And although our gospel tells the story of these temptations as occurring in the desert they were probably temptations that he had throughout his whole public life.

Because these three temptations which are about pride, power and possession. temptations that we all can relate to.

Perhaps the greatest weaknesses in our human condition can be traced back to the desire for one or maybe all of these three things: pride power and possessions

....and it was no different with Jesus... as Satan offered him everything from a loaf of bread to an entire kingdom.

But it is not so much the temptations themselves but the manner in which Jesus deals with these temptations... that becomes inspiring and useful for each one of us .

Jesus deals with these temptations in three ways

First he was that He was prepared for temptation.... Even all alone in the desert he was spiritually ready... and through using the tools of prayer and reflection He was able to respond to Satan without hesitation.

Secondly, he refused to compromise... to take the easy way out. In spite of hunger and loneliness and fatigue Jesus refused Satans empty promises ...choosing faithfulness to His Father to his own pain and discomfort.

The third thing that Jesus does is to dismiss Satan outright...reminding us that the simplest way of managing temptation is to tell Satan to go back where he came from.....something we so often forget to do.

Today's Gospel reminds us that temptation is something that ALL OF US has to deal with... Temptation is a sign of life ...just like our heart beat or the breaths we take.

Lent is that opportunity for honest self appraisal

I always liked that very short Prayer by Henri Nouwen about Lent:

"O Lord, make this Lenten season different from all the other ones.
Let me find you again.

Amen."

It is during this Lenten season that the Church invites us to go into the desert ourselves ...a spiritual desert... and spend forty days so that we can come to know the presence of God in our own lives.

God Bless