

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (A)

February 10, 2008

... I imagine that most of us don't relish Lent. But, we feel it's necessary – like medicine.

1) Lent is Like Spring

1. Lent an old word that refers to the lengthening of the daylight hours, and therefore to springtime.

2. Lent is a spiritual springtime: a time to prepare the ground of our hearts, to clear away the obstacles to spiritual growth, so the seed of the Word of God can take root in us.

3. Sun's life-giving rays bring growth. Lent a time to open up to the rays of the Holy Spirit who will warm our hearts.

2) God's Love

1. Lent is about God's love.

2. He says: "return to me with all your heart".

3. God wants our whole heart. Loves us with his whole heart, like a parent who wants to do everything he can for his children.

3) Temptation

1. Scripture Readings today are about temptation. Lent a time to strengthen ourselves against temptation, as Jesus did in the desert.

2. What's your greatest temptation? What are you doing about it? (One fellow said that he had no trouble with temptations – he simply gave in to them)

3. We can see in the temptations of Jesus the temptations coming to us from the culture, the society in which we are living: the temptations of materialism, of individualism, of power seeking.

4. Remember that Jesus experiences these temptations as man, like we would.

5. In the First Reading we hear about the basic temptation that has afflicted the human race from the beginning: to be independent of God, to be our own god, to be "like God".

4) The First Temptation: Materialism and Consumerism

1. We can see Jesus' temptation "to turn stones into bread" as the temptation of the pervading materialism that entices us to seek satisfaction and fulfillment in possessing earthly goods without regard to how our consumption affects others.

2. Even when reduced to extreme hunger, Jesus puts God and his direction of our lives first: "no one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God".

3. Application: Are the things we keep buying really necessary? Do we need an elaborate home entertainment centre, or the latest home appliance or furnishing, or a new car when the present one is in good condition? How do we feel when we see so many people struggling to obtain the necessities of life? Are we willing to give the money we spend on luxuries to the poor instead?

5) Second Temptation: Individualism

1. The second temptation was like getting Jesus to say: “Look at me, I can jump off a high building” – to be like Superman and win the acclaim of the people.
2. Quoting Scripture, Jesus replies: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test”.
3. Testing God means acting without God’s direction, presuming God will go along with you, no matter what you do, seeking to bend God to your plan.
4. The individualism that permeates our society tempts us to do our own thing, to go it alone, to seek our own goals without concern for the good of others.
5. Individualists do not take part in parish life or efforts for the good of the community; they disregard the situation of the poor because they are all wrapped up in themselves.
6. So we can ask: are we trying to live in solidarity with others, in mutual support? Are we working with others to help all the members of our groups to develop in all the ways they can and need to, whether in our family, workplace, parish, school, community?

6) Third Temptation: Power Seeking

1. We can see that Jesus’ third temptation is to get authority and power over the world but on the devil’s terms.
2. It’s a temptation to secularism: to put God out of our lives or part of them.
3. People make power and control over others their “gods”.
Huge corporations and money interests seek control over the economy, influence government and exploit others.
4. Jesus is tempted to an easy way to win over the world without suffering, but by sacrificing his allegiance to God, his principles. All of us can be tempted to overlook God and our Christian principles in order to achieve our goals.
5. Quoting Scripture, Jesus replies: “Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”
6. Sinful structures, systems and practices have been built up in our society to advance selfish, power seeking goals in economic and political life.
7. We may feel compelled to go along with this. For instance, our prevailing business emphasizes profit, even to the exclusion or neglect of how this affects others.
All businesses are caught up in this current and can find it hard to uphold the welfare of employees, with fair prices for customers and good quality and service.
8. To avoid expense and increase profit, environmental damage often occurs.
9. A sense of justice for the poor is lacking. Our current welfare system does not provide enough to live on and degrades those who receive social assistance.
10. We can ask: Do we seek to dominate others, control them, even in our own families? Do we plan our lives and activities to suit ourselves, without thinking about how God would have us act? Do we try to join forces with others, with social justice movements and groups, to overcome unjust systems and practices?

7) Our Need of Scripture

1. Notice how Jesus responds to the devil’s temptations with the words of Scripture, the Scripture he knows so well.
2. We need Scripture to be strong against temptation. Pope Paul said: “Spiritual growth is inconceivable without renewed listening to the Word of God. This must become a life giving encounter which questions, directs and shapes our lives.”

Our Mass

Now as we enter into our Eucharistic Prayer of Offering, we enter into the life giving power of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, to make us one with him and with each other, the power to give of ourselves to others as he gives himself for us.

NOTE TO USERS OF “HOMILY NOTES”:

Thank you for using the Homily Notes. We hope that they are helpful in preaching applications of the Sunday Readings to Catholic Social Teaching when the Readings indicate these. The Sunday homily is the primary way to educate our people in the Social Teaching of the Church of which so many have little awareness. If you have comments or suggestions about these Notes as to their content or format, would you please let us know by emailing lcum@rideau.net