

REFLECTION ON THE 1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

Turning Toward God

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TURNER

Beginning with Ash Wednesday we have begun our journey through lent. Lent is a season of repentance and preparation. It is a time for all people of God to think about the ways we have drifted from our faith. A time to renew our commitment and to be with God with an open heart. It is about turning toward God with intention and reflection on our past behaviors.

Our theme this year for Lent is “Toward the Glory of Easter” and within that theme the path to Easter and its Glory starts in the season of Lent. **We can offer ourselves to God by humbling our hearts and giving our hearts to him.** We are called to take a hard look at our lives and reflect on what in our lives brings us closer to God and what behaviors turn us away from Him.

In the very beginning Adam and Eve disobeyed God and disfigured our relationship with Him. Satan, the accuser, tempted our first parents by appealing to their pride. God’s love is so great he has given us the freedom of choice. Adam and Eve chose to turn away from God and the consequence was removal from paradise and death. Even then, God wanted to repair the

relationship that our first parents chose to disrupt. **How can we believe that the creator of the universe wants to be with us even when we turn away from him? Because, time and again throughout salvation history God has used nations and people to bring the hope filled message of unconditional mercy and renewal to us.** This salvation history is now available to us in the inspired word of God in the Bible. The Bible is part of the historical, spiritual path that leads us to the Glory of Easter. This message is the foundation of our belief in the Trinity.

In the Bible our faith or belief is not just intellectual conviction but also trust and personal commitment. We can have the confidence and the conviction that God is for us and He wants to guide our lives. God wants us to share eternal life with him. That is God's original plan. His will is that we share in his eternal life which is love and mercy itself.

The readings, the psalms, and the Gospel are all connected during Lent. They are connected with a common message. Our first reading today is about the Flood story. God establishes a covenant

with Noah and his descendants to never destroy all creatures of the earth by the waters of a flood. The rainbow that we see is a reminder and symbolizes that covenant. The flood story is about deliverance that Noah, his family, and the future of humanity were rescued by God. **This story shows our vulnerability to the laws of nature, the difficulties of life, and that we need to cling to God in the hope that God is with us.**

The Psalm in its essence is saying:

Lord, teach me your ways. Show me how to behave. It is a message of focus, to focus on the ways of the Lord and not the ways of the world.

In the second reading Peter brings the OT forward in Noah's story how a few were saved through water. Through our baptism with water we are transformed, just as the resurrection was a transforming experience for God. Christ saved us from destruction. **In Christ's resurrection there is the hope of our future in a changed body and eternity with Him.**

In Mark's Gospel today the Spirit is the driving force of Jesus' action in the desert. What is our driving force in our lives? The Holy Spirit? or the world's influence? Jesus is alone in the desert, yet he does not give in to Satan's temptations. How do we deal with our temptations? When we are alone in secret. Do we call on God or do we rebel? **Our trials are our desert. What are our responses to those trials and temptations?** Is our driving force pleasure, money, or power? Or is our driving force The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? The Trinity.

According to Gregory the Great temptation is brought into fulfillment in 3 stages. 1. Suggestion which is external and comes from the outside Pssst... go ahead no one is watching. 2. Delight, which is internal. That's where we in our creative imagination put ourselves in the experience of what it would be like to give into the temptation. 3. Consent where we give in to the

suggestion. Ahhh. It's alright it's just once... or nobody cares, everyone else is doing it. It is in our fallen human nature to give in to temptation.

The Gospel of Mark today speaks of Wild beasts and angels. In the OT Wild Beasts are associated with evil powers. In Mark he describes that Angels also ministered to Jesus. Some scholars believe that to mean that God provided food for Jesus. In Mark's account unlike the other synoptic Gospels Jesus is not said to be hungry. **When we are alone, isolated, with our difficult battles where no human help can deliver us, God provides Angels to help us.** Mark also writes that Jesus say's "The Kingdom is at hand." The kingdom is at hand in Mark's gospel in Jesus' own life. And for the Kingdom at hand in this life for us is in the Eucharist which is the real presence of Christ.

We heard on Ash Wednesday "Repent and believe in the Gospel" **Repent, not only means we're sorry but means change our hearts, to turn back to God, to change life's direction, adopting a new way of life.** The Goal of repenting is to be in communion with God. So, we are to seek his mercy and for us Catholic Christians we have the awesome sacrament of reconciliation or what we also call confession. Lent is the perfect time to stop rebelling and ask for his forgiveness. **Lent gives us an opportunity to make a course correction in our lives. It's a Spiritual tune up.** And for us today this can begin this morning.

How? By the experience of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, at this Mass and every Mass. His love and mercy endures forever.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning with open hearts that we want you to mold. We ask you through this Lenten season to protect our hearts, guide our hearts to behave in a way that brings us closer to you. Help us to realize more that with you all things are possible. We love you. We ask all these things through Christ our Lord Amen.