

My Dear Friends, on Ash Wednesday we heard the phrase from the Prophet Joel "even now...return to me with your whole heart," which sums up the meaning of Lent.

A time when we simplify our lives, make space for God, and throw open the doors and windows of our hearts to a love that is Indescribably Generous that we cannot define. Trusting Our Lord to make His merciful love present in our Hearts.

Our First Reading takes place in the Garden of Eden, which is where God gave to Adam and Eve all they would ever need including God Himself. They walked and talked with God, and everything was perfect. God shared everything with them including His Heart and all He asked Adam and Eve was to Trust in His Love.

Important Line we did not hear, "The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it" Gen 2:15. **Take Care of It Adam!**

Yet the Devil Tempted them into sin. Although they had everything – he tempted them by appealing to their EGO – a desire to be in control - a desire for more when they were given everything.

We know the rest of the story: God asks Adam why he ate the fruit from the forbidden tree – "Eve gave it to me." Eve why did you eat the fruit – "the Devil made me do it."

God has called us to love Him and to care for our Bodies and Souls like Adam was called to care for the Garden.

In the Gospel, the Spirit who called Jesus to the desert also calls us to make a forty-day pilgrimage. The number 40 is the number of trusting.

We may have forgotten that God asked the Israelites to up to the Promised Land after only a sort time in the desert.

Because they refused, they were made to spend one year for every day they refused to go up to Promised Land.

As they had spied on the land for 40 days and 40 nights, they were made to wander for 40 years.

The account of Jesus' temptations is an extraordinary story because it comes directly from Jesus Himself.

Jesus faced the same 3 temptations Israel faced in her desert journey. Jesus answers the devil with quotes from the Book of Deuteronomy, which describes Israel failure to trust God.

1. The Israelites grumbled about not having enough food. "It is not on bread alone that we live but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."
2. Israel tested God at Massah and Meribah to provide them with water. "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."

3. Israel constantly tended to chase after false gods (e.g. the golden calf)  
"You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."

However, Jesus did not rely on His own human strength and will-power for overcoming temptation. He relied on the Holy Spirit to give Him strength, wisdom, courage, and self-control as well as the Love of His Father.

Jesus also knew His Father's Heart and Trusted Him. He did not want to break His Father's Heart by giving into temptation. Jesus defeats all three temptations by trusting His Father and the result is that the enemy flees!

The Devil tried to tempt Jesus in the same way he tempted Adam and Eve. He assumed that Jesus also had a Desire for More. But really Jesus' desire is to make a Sacrifice.

It is important to know that the word Sacrifice has two Latin roots that mean "Holy and to offer." So the word Sacrifice literally means an offering to God to make Holy.

Think about the sacrifice of Jesus in the desert and on the Cross, His sacrifice for us.

Jesus was not about giving something up; He was about giving something too. That is an offering to the Father so that You and I can be holy.

We see this very same offering at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Jesus is not giving something up, He is offering His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension to His Heavenly Father for us so we can become Holy. – Veil Removed

Our Lenten Sacrifice should be something to help us "To offer to God something so we can be Holy: What does the Holy Spirit want us to do for the 40 days of Lent?

Do we seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom & guidance for overcoming sin and avoiding the near occasions of sin?

Avoiding near Occasions of Sin -Two Thoughts - Remove yourself from the Situation, or Invoke the Holy Spirit to resist participating in the occasion.

Jesus defeats all three temptations by trusting God and the result is that the enemy flees! So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and He will flee from you.

During this Lent, let us confront our occasions of sin by growing in holiness through Prayer and Reconciliation.

### **Daily Prayer:**

What if you just spent 10 minutes each day in quiet time with the Lord in prayer listening to Him? What if you asked: God - Please Show Me the Way!

Prayer is not something we do but something we allow God to do - simply to love us.

### **Confession: A Gift From God – Given on Easter Sunday**

Confession provides an outlet for us to be healed, to become whole, and to be renewed in our spiritual life.

- How many of you would you consider washing your Car every two years or every 5 years or more?

After you wash your car, you try really hard to keep it clean. (Inside and Out)

- What if you were only allowed to wash your car on the way home from Confession?

The grace of this sacrament causes us to become like Jesus, in all we say and do!

#### Questions for us to ask during Lent:

- Am I more like Israel in the desert (complaining, not trusting in God) or
- Am I more like Jesus in the desert (opening our hearts, trusting the Father, & answering the enemy with the Word of God)?

Just as Jesus fasted in the desert, Lent is the season for meaningful fasting - - fasting not just for the sake "of giving something up." But,

- Fasting from whatever derails or hampers our relationship with God, alienates us from others, or causes our near occasions of Sin.
- Fasting from everyday distractions in order to put our time and energy into the things of God.

We go into the wilderness to confront our weaknesses and to strengthen them by trusting in God, and our relationship with our heavenly Father by opening our hearts. Close Yr Eyes

Imagine You are in a field. Jesus is standing in front of you with a smile of welcome on His face. He asks you to name a few of the burdens you are carrying. Then He holds you in a long, lingering embrace. Your problems dissolve.

Remember our relationship with God is more important than any-thing else. And the love He has poured into our hearts with His divine grace is one of the greatest gifts He has given us.

Our hearts have many doors and many rooms. Our Journey is learning to open those doors to the endless beauty of our Eternal Lover's Heart.

Dear Lord, help me to open my heart to you this Lent by letting my day-to-day living be saturated in your merciful love.

We adore You O Christ and we praise you, Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.