

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Church begins every Lent with a Gospel about Jesus going into the desert. Jesus, aware of his upcoming ministry knew that spending time in solitude and prayer was necessary. He not only fought the physical battles of fasting and endurance, but he also fought spiritual battles thrown at him by Satan.

We are so much like Jesus in this manner. We too battle the forces of Satan, and perhaps feel, at times, we have not made any progress in intimacy with God. The root word from Latin for intimacy is *timeo*—fear. To be intimate is to go into or through the fear we may have. Unfortunately, our modern world has somewhat narrowed this to refer to sexual contact. Intimacy allows another person inside my skin so-to-speak.

Perhaps my fear of intimacy with God is that if I get really close to him he may ask of me too much and I can't see past myself to trust him enough. Some, for example, look carefully into their financial situation,

settle on how they should use their money, and pray about it. They are sincere and are not trying to slack away from obligations to God.



A shortcoming in this approach is that I do not bring my finances into and under the spiritual component of my life. The spiritual question is, “Does my heart truly accept that whatever material possession I have belong first to God? That he blesses me with these goods for the use of his kingdom? If I have that spiritual truth then, God must be first in my finances. Is my intimacy with God deep enough that he is the first I consider when distributing my finances?”

Perhaps your intimacy with God is not as deep and holds back passion for your spouse because you may have to surrender pride or independence. No one does that easily. That requires spouses to move off

center point and view your spouse as an integral part of yourself, which aids in gaining your salvation. It requires a lot of humility and generosity. You must unlearn holding your spouse in your heart, and learn to hold your heart in your spouse, not an easy task.

Perhaps our intimacy with God is not as deep and we hold back evangelizing those around us. We allow ourselves to be embarrassed about our faith because we may be fearful of our neighbor's reaction or ridicule, our lack of knowledge about our faith, our lack of faith in our faith, our inability to articulate our faith, etc. Intimacy is hard work and maybe we just don't want to put in the time or other things seem more important.

We can disguise our fear as a rationalization that the theory sounds good but after all we have to be practical. But God calls to an uncommon sense: love your enemies, turn the other cheek, forgive the other, sell all you have and give it to the poor, lay down your life for your enemies. His common sense teaches that his power working in us can far more than we can think or imagine (Eph. 3:20).

pace – bene,