

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

First Sunday of Lent - 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin the Lenten journey let us heed the summons of the Lord as read in the Book of Deuteronomy. In gratitude for God's graciousness to us we offer him the "*first fruits*" which in reality should be our very lives. The rule of life for practicing Catholics is "God first in all things". We were created by God for God.

We are reminded in the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. We need only believe with our hearts and not over think the *mystery of God*. God is closer and nearer to us than we are to ourselves. St. Paul assures us, "*If we believe we will not be put to shame.*" We give evidence of our belief in charity and mercy which is the second rule of life.

The Lenten season offers us an opportunity to collectively repent of our sins, restore the sacred to its proper place, and to be renewed in Christ for the purpose of witness.

The forty days Jesus spent in the desert and his encounter with Satan while there, are realities not limited to forty days, but characterize the entire journey of Jesus to Calvary and through the Paschal Mystery. As it was for him so it is for you and me. Jesus moved in and out of the desert and the devil with him. St. Paul reminds us rather poignantly, "*Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)*"

The three temptations Jesus resisted are a lesson to us all.

1. The devil said: *Make the stones bread*. Jesus responded: *Man does not live on bread alone*. The Eucharistic Gift Jesus offers of himself as we make our way through this life is consecrated in the ritual sacrifice of the Mass and must be received alone and not mingled with other foods. Jesus feeds us that we not collapse. The Eucharist is spiritually potent and not only strengthens us but is a pledge to us that Jesus wishes to reproduce his life in us.
2. The devil said: *Worship me and I will give you everything – all power and glory over all kingdoms of this world*. Jesus responded: *Worship the Lord your God and him alone shall you serve*. This exchange is a reminder that Satan is "*Lord of the world that passes away*". He is the deceiver, seducer, and accuser. During the season of Lent let us put away any false idols or false gods and place ourselves anew and exclusively under the *Lordship of Jesus Christ*. He alone is the Lord of *history* and the Lord of *heaven and earth*. We renounce Satan and all his pomposity.
3. The devil quotes sacred scripture trying to entice Jesus to put God the Father to the test. Jesus responds: *You shall not put the Lord your God to the test*. For our part we must detach from the arrogance so prominent in our time. Ours is an arrogance that boasts of independence from God, an arrogance that accuses God, and an arrogance that perverts and distorts the natural and sacred order of all things. Ours must be the path of humility and trustful surrender.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, in all her apparitions, heralds the need for penance and conversion to avert catastrophes and calamities. Her call is issued in one word often repeated several times: *Penance – Penance – Penance*. Penance carries a three-fold translation: Pray, fast, and act in charity. Our response to her call and the very purpose of Lent is to nurture right relationship with God, deliverance from the wiles of the devil, and to assist others on the way.

May our observance of this penitential season stir the Lord's concern for us and spare us his reproach. Heed the words of St. Paul: *We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

In the Lord Jesus,

Fr. Anthony Buś, C.R. - Pastor