

1st Sunday of Lent - C
Deuteronomy 26:4-10;
Romans 10:8-13;
Luke 4:1-13
Little Flower - 3/10/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Lent. Today's readings invite us to reflect on God's gifts to us and our response to those gifts.

In today's reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the Israelites on how they are to celebrate their feast of Pentecost. The Exodus was the central event of Old Testament salvation history. Therefore, they are to begin by remembering the wonderful deeds of God in delivering them from slavery in Egypt and in giving them the gift of the Promised Land. They are therefore to offer to God in thanksgiving the first fruits of the products of the soil, recognizing that God is the giver of all gifts, including the very gifts they are offering.

This Old Testament ritual foreshadows our celebration of the Eucharist. At every Eucharist, we are reminded that the central event of New Testament salvation history is the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We traditionally referred to the Eucharist as the Sacrifice of the Mass. In other words, celebrating the Eucharist, we believe that Jesus' sacrifice 2000 years ago is made really present in the Eucharist. We then give back to God our best: we offer ourselves through, with, and in Christ to God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

By now you should all have received my letter concerning attendance at Sunday Mass. Today I would like suggest that during this Lent, we all deepen our appreciation of the meaning and importance of Sunday Eucharist in our lives. In today's second reading, Paul reminds us that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. We know, however, that this faith in Jesus as Lord and this belief in his resurrection from dead has to also be celebrated and lived. We celebrate our faith when we celebrate Eucharist, and we live our faith when we love and serve others sacrificially.

Each year on the first Sunday of Lent, the Church proclaims the Gospel story of Jesus' temptation in the desert. Lent challenges us to look at our lives more closely and to put out of our lives the sin and the selfishness that alienate us from God, others, the world, and ourselves. However, Lent also challenges us to look more closely at the way we see all of reality.

About 25 years ago, there was an interesting article listing the sins of modernity. From the earliest days of Christianity, theologians identified the seven deadly sins from which all others came: pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and laziness. One writer has suggested seven modern sins for our reflection.

My brothers and sisters, as we begin our Lenten journey, I invite us to reflect on these modern sins, to change at least some of the ways we see reality, and to work to put them out of our lives.

Debased entertainment: many of us are entertained by cruelty, violence, and celebrations of shamelessness in movies, television, and music.

Moral distancing: many of us live in our own little worlds, unconcerned about outrageous moral evils in the larger world, such as wars, poverty, injustice, and inequality.

Addictions: many of us allow ourselves and our lives to be controlled by people, processes, or chemicals, such as alcohol and illegal drugs.

Child abuse: emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and, perhaps more commonly, emotional and physical neglect of children are rampant today.

Perversions of excellence: many use their God-given gifts and talents solely for themselves and sometimes even corrupt these gifts for sin.

Generational selfishness: many adult children simply abandon their elderly parents and relatives.

Finally, sins that keep on giving: we accept our sinful habits as unchangeable.