

1st Sun Lent A

Introduction...

We are beginning another season of Lent.

How ya doin? "Same ol, same ol?"

I asked a young woman how she was doing and that's what she said...
"Same ol, same ol."

She added, " I get out of bed each morning, have a bowl of cereal, go to work, have a salad for lunch, come home and have a salad for dinner, then go to bed." It feels like I do this everyday... same ol, same ol.

Is that what your life is about... same ol, same ol – punctuated with some entertainment and some Mall purchasing?.. and of course watching American Idol. What makes us happy? What gives our life meaning? Where are we going?

Refrain... Teach Me Your Ways O Lord

I Christian Time

We are now in the season of Lent.

For us Catholics, our year is not always "same ol, same ol."

Time is not just linear – day after day, really heading nowhere in particular, just a matter of days and years ending in death...

Time is not just cyclic – nature's seasons... Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter... always repeating in an endless circle.

Our worship year is broken into a number of seasons – Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter, Pentecost... then back to Ordinary Time...

Each of these Seasons deal with the development of Christ's life and its meaning for us... for our lives are a journey in the footsteps of Christ... our lives are headed somewhere... our lives are effected by Christ and indeed our goal is to become more like Jesus whom we follow.

Lent, Holy Week and the Easter Cycle are part of how we understand our life's journey, what it means, where it came from and where it's going.

Refrain... Teach Me Your Ways O Lord

II Our Story... the Beginnings

Our Story as told in our Sacred Scriptures is complex.

Let's look at this Sunday's Readings... the First Sunday of Lent.

The First Reading is from the first of our Sacred Book, Genesis. What do we believe?

In the beginning there was an idealic garden in which God placed the parents of our human race. They were happy and contented. Then they sinned!

Sin

OOPS... Something happened. Sin enters the picture... a topic not too readily understood today.

What is sin? How does our loving God respond to our sin and its disastrous effects?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has this to say about sin:

Only the light of divine Revelation clarifies the reality of sin...

without the knowledge Revelation gives of God

we cannot recognize sin clearly

and are tempted to explain it as merely a developmental flaw,

a psychological weakness, a mistake,

or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure, etc.

Only in the knowledge of God's plan for man can we grasp that sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons

so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another.
(# 387)

What do our Sacred Scriptures tell us about **sin**?

When the Jewish people of the Old Testament looked at how broken their world was,

how much violence and pain and suffering people caused each other, they asked how a loving creator God could have allowed this.

They told the story of our world and our first parents created lovingly by God and placed in a beautiful Garden, and given charge of the Garden and the animals.

God also gave them freedom – they were not automatons.

God made them to love God, and to love each other, and to love this world.

God gave them only one commandment... don't eat of *that* tree.

And the serpent said,

"Go ahead, don't worry, you'll be just like God if you eat that fruit."

They ate that fruit.

They decided that they wanted to do it their way, not God's way.

They decided that they knew better than God.

They wanted to be their own god – with a little "g".

And sin entered our world.

Adam and Eve were tempted and fell.

The story of sin begins in the Garden of Eden and continues to this very day.

Refrain... Teach Me Your Ways O Lord

III Jesus Comes

Despite the coming of sin and its spread throughout the world, even to this

day, our loving creator God does not abandon us.

In today's Gospel we see that God sends his own beloved Son, who himself is tempted –

even as all of us are tempted.

But Jesus does not fall.

Even when sinful people torture and execute Jesus, he does not abandon his loving Father...

The Second Reading tells us that in Jesus' love for and obedience to his loving Father, and in Jesus' forgiveness and love for all of us... we are all saved. We have fallen in Adam and Eve, we are saved in Jesus, the new Adam.

Jesus shows us how to live on our journey of life... loving our Father, loving each other, loving this beautiful world.

Refrain... Teach Me Your Ways O Lord

IV Temptations

Now comes the tough part... so what?

What effect does this have on our lives?

How do we respond to our story?

Let's take part of today's Gospel Story... Temptation.

Adam and Eve were tempted.

Jesus was tempted.

Temptation doesn't stop there.

How are we tempted?

Do we turn to Jesus asking for strength to withstand the temptations of our life?

Temptation # 1

Are we tempted to seek our worthwhile-ness and our happiness in the pursuit of material well-being... in our constantly purchasing "stuff" to make us happy?

Jesus, God's own Son, did not have a lot of stuff.

He did not seek his comfort in material things.

Jesus didn't dress in the latest fashion, he didn't own a camel... Jesus didn't even own an ipod!

"Not by bread alone are we to live..."

Our culture is tempted to seek redemption and happiness and fulfillment in things... are we tempted in this way?

Temptation # 2

Are we tempted to distrust God when hard times come along?

Why doesn't God seem to hear our prayers?

Why aren't God's angels there to help us when we stumble, or when others we love stumble...

felled by health problems, or money problems, or addiction problems?

We need to remember that God's beloved Son himself stumbled... he couldn't get his message across to that many people, even his close disciples had such a hard time getting it... and Jesus, the beloved Son, was finally brought down by the envy and hatred of others, and he stumbled on his way to Calvary – executed for being a troublemaker.

Jesus never lost faith in the love of his Father, even in the midst of his troubles.

I'm sure he was tempted to... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

But at the end he said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

Don't be surprised when you are tempted to give up on God.

It's a temptation... ask Jesus to help you trust that God has not abandoned you... that you are still God's beloved son and daughter.

Temptation # 3

What are our other temptations?

Temptation is not a word we use today.

Our culture acts as if anything is allowed,
as if our every whim should be pursued and satisfied.
Self-interest runs the lives of so many... along with self-will.

We all become a little god.

If we don't get things our way, if we don't get things done *when* we want them and *how* we want them... look out.

So often our culture is governed by self-will run riot.

Might this be a *temptation*?

To always want things our way?...
and then to suffer the resentments, the anger, the envy, the negativism
because life doesn't fit into our "our way".

"All these things I will bestow on you if you prostrate yourself in homage
before me."

Do we worship at the idol of self-centeredness.

Do we ever say with Jesus,

*Away Satan... you shall do homage to the Lord your God, him alone shall you
adore.*

Lord Jesus, deliver us from the altar of self-centeredness, self pampering,
selfishness.

Help us to recognize that your footsteps show us the way of care and compassion, forgiveness and concern.

Refrain... Teach Me Your Ways O Lord

Conclusion...

Do you realize that we are a beloved son and daughter of God, even in the midst of your temptations?

That's our true identity.

That's what our life is about... we live an adventurous journey.

We try to follow in Jesus' footsteps. It's not always easy.

Temptations will come. Jesus himself was tempted.

Jesus is there to help pick us up and to help transform us into his disciples.

As we continue with this Mass,
ask him to help strengthen you,
to fill you with his heavenly food and refreshment,
to bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone,
and to help you dethrone yourself and let Jesus sit on the throne in your heart.

Refrain... Teach Me Your Ways O Lord