

Cycle A First Sunday of Lent

Reading I, Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7

The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?" The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil." The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight."

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy spirit take not from me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Reading II, Rom 5:12-19 or 5: 12, 17-19

Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned -- for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many. And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.

Gospel, Mt 4:1-11

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve." Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

I've been retired from work for 9 years now...I retired on the day my granddaughter Phoebe was born, so it's easy for me to remember how long ago it was. When People ask me what I like about retirement, I always say that "I like doing nothing." Actually, what I mean by is that "I like not being over-scheduled." I try to schedule only one thing a day. If I do more than that, I start to feel the pressure of time. You see, I think time can be a problem for us. We live lives filled with multiple options, with many things to do and opportunities for any number of tasks. I mean who doesn't struggle balancing work and home activities? Sometimes, maybe most of the time, we have so many things to do we don't know which ones to tackle first. Yes, time can be a problem for us.

Our Catholic Church organizes time, not only according to calendar and the clock, but according to significant events: Ash Wednesday, Lent, the great Triduum, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, Mary's Feast days, the saint's Feast days. The Church's Liturgical Calendar is her gift to us to be sure that, despite all that the world hurls at us, we might take some moments to celebrate these significant events.

The Greeks had two measurements of time: the word Chronos to denote time as clocks and calendars measure it. And, another carefully selected word, Kairos... moments in which we experience events of significance and meaning.

When we get married it is an event that occurs in Kairos time. Baptism is another such event. Our family photographs can take us out of Chronos time and put us into Kairos time...memories of events that fully and truly measure what has happened in our lives.

In today's Gospel we find Jesus in Kairos time. After His baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, Jesus did not immediately embark on His public ministry. Rather, the Holy Spirit led Him to a place where time was special. Jesus went out into the desert for forty days and forty nights to come to terms with who He was and what His life was

meant to be... to be tempted by the devil and ministered by Angels...to understand what sort of Messiah-Christ His Father had called Him to be. This was for Him a time full of great significance and grace... it was Kairos time!

Jesus needed this time in the desert to have a clear understanding of just who He was when He had to face spiritually and physically disabled people in the days to come. Jesus needed to know Himself when He had to face down the religious and political establishments that would hunt Him down. We see that frequently He would take some Kairos time from His Chronos time to go to deserted places to pray, getting back in touch with His Father in heaven.

Our forty days of Lent are much the same. These forty days are taken from our Chronos time so that we can get in touch with who we are, to answer what our lives are meant to be, as well as get more deeply in touch with our heavenly Father and His son Jesus. Lent is like a Pilgrimage in Kairos time...a significant time in which we can suspend Chronos time for a while. It's a way to fix our problem of time.

Here's an idea from Pope Leo XIV for Lent this year, *"I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves."*

We need to remember that:

- When we were conceived in our mother's womb we began to live in time.
- When we were born, we began to interact with each other in time.
- When we were baptized, we began a new lifetime living in relationship with God in time.

- When we were confirmed, we were blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be Jesus' hands and feet and heart in the world all the time.
- When we marry, we respond to the call to be the best spouse and loving parent we can be, all the time.
- And when we die -- time for us does not stop, it only changes.

You see, here's the secret in plain sight: we don't have to be in Lent to enter Kairos time....our life is already in Kairos time...it's a series of moments in which we experience events of significance and meaning. When we use Lent to rekindle the blessed time we are offered, is then that we will come to realize that we are always living in the Kingdom of God in Kairos time...

- a time of meaning and consequence, every day...
- a time of significance and grace with Jesus present in our lives, every day....
- a time to understand that we are here to love and serve each other, every day!

I thank the Lord there's people out there like you! Because of you, I know God loves us...because of you, I know that God loves me!

Did I mention that my granddaughter Phoebe was born 9 years ago?...it was Kairos time!