

Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of March, 2017

by Terry A . Modica



1st Sunday of Lent

March 5, 2017

Read:

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Ps 51:3-6, 12-13, 17

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11



Reflect:

How do you deal with temptation? That's the personal challenge given to us by the Word of God on the first Sunday of Lent. And so we begin our journey with Jesus, traveling to the holiest place we can reach at this point in our lives.

This Lent is like no other Lent. Last year, you had different needs, different areas of growth, different levels of insight and understanding. Much has happened since then, and all of it is a preparation for what the Lord is going to do in your life right now.

What victory do you need this year? What needs to be resurrected? To get there, Jesus will lead you through the cross of penance and self-denial, into his tomb, and out into God's light where his love provides healing and new life.

During Lent – and every time we make sacrifices and connect our sufferings to the Passion of Christ – we follow Jesus to the cross and to resurrection. This involves seeing our own crosses in a new light, for the Calvary Road is the only way to reach the victories that we yearn to experience.

If we want Easter to be more than just a holiday of colored eggs, chocolate bunnies and big dinners, we have to make Lent more than just 40 days of enduring an annoying, obligatory sacrifice, eating meatless pizza on Fridays, and going to an occasional extra event at church.

If we want to experience the power of resurrection, we have to experience the power of mourning and repenting from our sinfulness. In other words, we have to experience the powerlessness of death – the

death of our selfishness, the death of our worldliness, the death of our behaviors that are not like Christ's.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What can you do this week to die to self? For example, think of a good deed you can do that's the opposite of what your selfishness wants you to do. How will this spiritual exercise make it easier to resist sin?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† In the story from Genesis, what did Adam and Eve need to die to (let go of, put aside, or reject) in order to resist the Original Sin? Why didn't they?

† In the reading from Romans, we hear about the abundant grace and the gift of justification that Jesus provided to each of us when he died on the cross. How does this grace and justification give us life? In other words, how does God help us to resist sin?

† Looking at the Gospel passage, what did Jesus have to die to in the desert so that he could say no to temptation?

Comments/Prayer Requests:

4th Sunday of Lent

March 26, 2017

Read:

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Psalms 23:1-6

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

Reflect:

Conversion to Christ is a process. The blind man in the Gospel reading exemplifies this journey into faith. Notice that at first he did not go to Jesus. Jesus came to him. The man responded by waiting to see what would happen and then by obeying Jesus.

Conversion begins when Jesus seeks us out and we make ourselves available to his touch. He then opens our eyes to the truth, but we don't immediately understand.

When the man's neighbors asked about his cure, he did not yet understand who Jesus was, he thought of him as just a man.

Then, the pressure of listening to the Pharisees argue about who Jesus was caused him to give it more thought. He concluded that Jesus must be a prophet, which for the Jews was a highly esteemed, holy vocation.

Next, as the Pharisees treated him more roughly and raised the possibility of expelling him from the synagogue if he claimed that Jesus was the Christ, he began to wonder whether it might be true. Their reasons for hating Jesus became the eye-openers that cured his spiritual blindness.

Finally, Jesus sought him out again, this time to minister to him in response to the mistreatment he had suffered from the Pharisees. In this act of caring, the man could see who Jesus really was.

Conversion – the purification of our spiritual vision – takes place in the fire of our sufferings as we recognize the love and concern that God has for us.



Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Name the areas of your life where there is confusion from a lack of understanding. Perhaps you're having a hard time seeing the good in someone. Maybe you're worried about the future. What will you do this week that will help you see it from God's perspective?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† In the first reading, God makes it clear that he sees what we cannot see when we're focused on external evidence. Think of a time when you looked deeper or beyond the obvious. How did that change you?

† In Ephesians 5, we read that we have become light in the Lord. Name some of the good fruits that come from the ability to see what Jesus is doing in your life.

† The Gospel reading illustrates that those who think they can see the truth are very often blind, and those who acknowledge their blindness become able to see clearly. Why does this happen? How has it happened to you?

Comments/Prayer Requests: