

If I asked each of you to describe your relationship with God, I am sure there would be a variety of answers. It's a good question for us to ponder this Lenten Season.

- How does my belief in the Almighty impact the decisions I make on a daily basis?
- How does it affect my relationships with other people?
- How much time do I spend in prayer, in quiet conversation with God?

Lent is a time for us to enter into a journey of self-discovery that leads to a deeper relationship with our great God of Love. The words of our opening prayer this morning: **“O God of mercy and compassion, through our observance of Lent, help us to understand the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection and teach us to reflect it in our lives”** captures the true meaning of Lent.

Lent is a time for us to focus on our relationship with God.

- What does it mean to us that God came to earth to dwell among us in flesh and blood?
- What does it mean to us that Jesus suffered and died for us?
- What does it mean to us that Jesus rose from the dead and gave us eternal life?
- What does it mean to us when we approach this altar to be fed with the Body and Blood of Christ?

The whole purpose of Lent is to help us understand the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus and to live it in our daily lives.

In Mark's gospel today, we find Jesus ready to begin his public ministry. Jesus is aware that he has a unique purpose, that he has a difficult journey ahead. But, that is where his certainty ends – as it does for

many of us. At this point in his life, Jesus is unsure of what his ministry, his life, and his call are all about. So Jesus turns to prayer. He takes the time to listen, to reflect upon life's direction, and to pray for strength and guidance.

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark does not tell us what temptations Jesus faced. There is some wisdom in not naming the temptations, because it doesn't matter how Jesus was tempted. Each one of us face different temptations in life. What is important is that Jesus was able to rise above his temptations because he was keenly aware of the importance of having a relationship with the Holy One. Jesus took the time to pray and reflect, to spend quality time with the Almighty.

So when Jesus went off into the desert, the temptations he faced were real, and as we all know from personal experience, there is a real allure for sin.

- But Jesus knew that the solution to life's problems was not going to be solved the easy way.
- Jesus knew deep down that his calling was not to be a superstar, but to be a servant.
- His ministry was not about wearing a crown of gold in triumph, but rather, he was to wear a crown of thorns and carry a cross to his death.

Jesus did this, Jesus walked his journey so that we, you and I, could have eternal life.

This Lenten season is a time for us to follow the example of Jesus and to spend time in a spiritual desert by praying, repenting, and doing good works. It's a time for us to prepare our hearts and minds to welcome the Risen Lord.

In our first two readings today, we heard about the great flood and the promise that God would never again destroy the earth. We heard of God's

irrevocable covenant between God and humanity. While God's love is without limits or bounds, we can reject that love in our hearts by allowing temptations to control us, to distract us from our relationship with God and one another.

My challenge to you during this Lenten season is to do something positive to nourish your faith. Make room for God in the business of life. Try doing something special for God that will strengthen your prayer life or make someone else's life a little easier. By doing something special, by spending time in prayer, by offering up some simple pleasures, you are focusing your attention on your spiritual journey and opening your minds and hearts to God. Spend five or fifteen minutes, or an hour if you can, in prayer every day. The closer we move to God, the stronger our faith becomes, which in turn helps move us further outside the reaches of temptation.