



PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

Facilitated by Racine Dominican Preaching Committee February 2021

The In-between Time

Liturgically we are in-between the Christmas season of Light and the Lenten season of cleaning up what that Light reveals.

Let's first consider the Light. Notice how it expands. It begins with Mary, then Joseph is brought in. Then the shepherds come to let us know that the poor have priority. Next the Magi come to tell us everybody's included. Then the local Jewish folks get in on it when the sky opens up at Jesus' baptism. Then the apostles' eyes widen when the water becomes wine at Cana, and they are to become emissaries of humanity's new Bridegroom. Finally, the Light is presented in the temple on February 2, and the fullness of the Light in our midst has found a home... for we are that temple, and the Light has made its home in us by our baptism. Where to from here? Where is the Church going to take us?

Well, light enables us to see a lot of things. Wonderful things, and things we had better get rid of. Light shows us that dust on the table, the grime in the sink, and the stains on the carpet. The Church is going to take us by the hand on Ash Wednesday, smudge a bit of ash on our foreheads to make the point, and call us to our yearly housecleaning of the soul.

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving...the three helpers are called in on the housecleaning project. They are experts to expose and treat three ego-wounds that can give us a fever. We get hot and bothered over power (who's in charge), possessions (what I want), and pleasure (how I comfort myself). When these three reign in my life I'm under the weather spiritually. I forget that any control I have comes from the One who is with me. Prayer gets that point home. I forget that I can't take any of that stuff in my closet or garage with me when I die. Almsgiving opens up my tight fist to an open giving hand. I forget that I can't always have what I want. Fasting teaches me to delay what comforts me: be it the food I really don't need, the judgments I make of others, or whatever I use to lie to myself about what comforts me other than the arms of the Shepherd.

Ash Wednesday begins the time to take a long loving look at the life-tasks the Light shows me.



*Lord, you have moved into your dwelling place.
Your clothes are unpacked and your coat hangs in the closet.
Your apron is on and the Windex is ready.
Give me time.
The Light makes me blink, OK?
It needs to register that you have come to help me.
My place is a mess...I don't know where to start.
But one loving look from you and I can take a deep breath...
...and roll up my sleeves.*

Special thanks to Associate Miles Vilski for the February Reflections.

Sunday, February 7, 2021 | 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 7:1-4, 6-7, 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23, Mark 1:29-39

There is a marked contrast between the Book of Job and Mark's Gospel, between hopelessness and hopefulness. Without Jesus as the focus of his life, Job sees life as drudgery and filled with unhappiness. Jesus' presence in Capernaum reverses the people's "months of misery." For them then and for us today Jesus undoes hopelessness with hopefulness. As disciples of Jesus, do our words and actions bring hope or despair?

Sunday, February 14, 2021 | 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lev. 13:1-2, 44-46, 1 Cor 10:31-11:1, Mark 1:40-45

The healing of a leper by Jesus in today's Gospel provides us with an impetus to reflect on who are our modern day "lepers." Who do we consider unclean and shove to the margins of our society? What illness, prejudice, hatred, taboo or misunderstanding that we have causes us to treat others as lepers? The words of the leper to Jesus are spoken to us today: "If you want to, you can cure me."

Sunday, February 21, 2021 | 1st Sunday in Lent

Gen. 9:8-15, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Mark 1:12-15

Mark's Gospel for today begins with the words "The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert." The Greek verb translated into English as "drove" has the sense in the Greek language of compelling someone to do something against their will. So Mark is writing that Jesus didn't want to go away to reflect on His past life as a carpenter and His new life as prophet/rabbi. As we begin Lent this year, oh, that the Spirit would drive each one of us into a deserted place to reflect on our current spiritual life and practices in order to form us into more authentic disciples of Jesus.

Sunday, February 28, 2021 | 2nd Sunday of Lent

Gen. 22:1-2 9a, 10-13, 15-18, Romans 8:31b-34, Mark 9:2-10

There are two valuable lessons we can learn from today's Gospel of the Transfiguration. We cannot model ourselves after St. Peter who wanted to stay on the mountain top wrapped in the ecstasy of the transfigured Jesus. Time spent on our knees in prayer before the Lord is important, yes, but that is not what the focus of our life should be. We are to be disciples of Jesus going out among the people. Secondly Jesus reminded the apostles while they went down the mountain, He was headed to Jerusalem to suffer and die. True disciples of Jesus will suffer the loss of themselves in service of others. As Jesus said: "For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it. But anyone who loses his life for my sake and the sake of the Gospel will save it."