

First Sunday of Lent B

Gen 9:8-15
1 Pt 3:18022
Mk 1:12-15



It is difficult to make changes to a lifestyle we are used to. Yet, sometimes we are forced to make changes because of the things that happen to us or because of a change in external circumstances. Sometimes our health or illness can lead us to change our lifestyle.

Today, Jesus is inviting us to a different sort of change in our lifestyle—a change in lifestyle that affects our relationship with God. Jesus began the proclamation of the Gospel saying, “The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

“Repent” in Greek is *metanoia*, which literally means “a change of mind and heart.” As we begin the season of Lent, Jesus is not just asking us to temporarily forego something pleasurable—like giving up chocolate for Lent. But, the call to *metanoia* is something more—it is to turn away from everything evil and turn toward God. There is no better time to make these changes than the season of Lent. It is a season of introspection. These six weeks are set aside each year by the Church to look at our lives to see where we need changes, to seek forgiveness, and to grow in our relationship with God. It is a time of renewal and a time to go to the desert with Christ.

The Prophet Joel said to the people, “Rend your hearts and not your garments.” Thomas Merton said, “Rending our garments lets in nothing but cold, but rending our hearts lets out sins, and lets in the clean air of God’s spring.” The word “Lent” means spring—a good time for heart cleaning. These 40 days we join Jesus in the wilderness in prayer and fasting, making every effort to grow in our love for our Savior.

The gospel reading on the first Sunday of Lent speaks of the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert and that he was tempted by Satan. Once, four priests were spending a couple of days at a cabin. In the evening they decided to tell each other their biggest temptation.

The first priest said, “Well, it’s kind of embarrassing, but my big temptation is watching TV. I spend a lot of time watching movies. I have five different subscriptions to watch movies.”

“My temptation is worse,” said the second priest. “It’s gambling. One weekend I called in sick, but I was in Las Vegas. It is getting bad.”

“Mine is worse still,” said the third priest. “I sometimes can’t control the urge to drink. One time, I actually broke into the sacramental wine.”

The fourth priest was quiet. “Brothers, I hate to say this,” he said, “but my temptation is worst of all. I love to gossip—and if you guys will excuse me, I’d like to make a few phone calls!”

Temptations are bound to come into our lives. There is a certain amount of attractiveness in every temptation. All sin is attractive—otherwise, we would not be tempted by it. When someone says, “If it feels good, do it,” what they are saying is sin is acceptable as long as it makes you feel good. That is the way of the world, but not the way of Jesus. He conquered the temptations. When we analyze, we see that our temptations are in those areas where we are most weak. Most temptations are in the areas of basic human drives like food, drink, external appearances, power, sex, name and fame, material possessions, and so on. Temptations are bound to come. Jesus was tempted, but He did not yield to it.

A Chinese proverb says, “You cannot prevent the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from nesting on your head.” With the help of the Lord, we can face temptations without falling into them. Prayer and fasting are required to battle temptations. Even when we fall into temptations, let us remember that God does not give up on us. Christ, the conqueror of sin and death, is at our side. With His help, nothing can make us fall. During this Lent, let us make a strong personal commitment to battle every temptation and get closer to God.