

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

February 4, 2018

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 1:29-39

Option 1

**“When it was evening, after sunset,
they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.”**

In the late Fourth Century Evagrius Ponticus, a Christian monk, refined a prevailing list of eight patterns of evil: *Gluttony, Lust, Greed, Sadness, Acedia, Anger, Vainglory, and Pride*. In the Sixth Century Pope Gregory revised the list to form the more commonly known list of Seven Deadly Sins: *Pride, Greed, Lust/Extravagance, Envy, Gluttony, Wrath/Anger, and Sloth* (a combination of *Complacency and Apathy*). Whatever they are called, they all tempt us to sin against the unconditional love and generous gifts of God. They are the demons in our life that turn us away from God and turn us into our own selfish world. These are some of the demons Jesus came to drive out of the people of his time and that he hopes we can drive out of our lives today by getting to know him better and by imitating him more closely. Imagine life without *Pride, Greed, Lust/Extravagance, Envy, Gluttony, Wrath/Anger, and Sloth* - in us and in others.

Option 2

“Everyone is looking for you.”

Of course everyone was looking for Jesus. He cured their sick and drove out their demons. They believed in him because of what they had seen him do. But had they listened to his message and did they believe what he had to say? Jesus would eventually tell others that “It is your faith that has healed you.” In the first reading [Job 7:1-4, 6-7] recants his life of drudgery, loss and pain. The passage concluded, “I shall not see happiness again.” But Job did not lose faith in God when the Lord allowed Satan to test him, so God restores Job’s fortunes and gives him a beautiful family. Faith that does not endure when tested is not faith. As long as Jesus stayed in Capernaum and healed their sick and drove out demons, they believed in him. The test of their faith is whether they continued to believe in him when he left to preach the gospel to others by his words and actions. The test for us is whether we believe the faith they passed on to us.

February 11, 2018
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mark 1:40-45

Option 1

“I do will it. Be made clean.” Mark 1:40-45

Leprosy was the most socially abhorrent condition a person could have in the time of Jesus. A leper had to live outside of the city and could not engage in normal social life with their family or friends, or anyone else. They lived on the scraps people literally threw to them, or at them, and had to carry a bell to announce their presence as they moved about so people could avoid them. There was no known cure or hope of relief from a degrading existence and the slow and painful death. One such leper approached Jesus, knelt down and said “If you wish, you can make me clean.” What an incredible act of faith! Jesus does not run away from or repel the leper. He recognizes a great act of faith and he has great faith in the leper, the faith that heals. The leper was healed by faith - his faith in Jesus. Jesus wants us to have faith in him - the faith that heals whatever is keeping us from a greater relationship with God by imitating Jesus. Do we have a faith like the leper to ask Jesus to heal us?

Option 2

“If you wish, you can make me clean.”

The laws of hygiene attributed to Moses in the Book of Leviticus were to prevent the spread of diseases like leprosy literally condemned a person to a life separated from family, friends and the rest of the community. Illnesses like leprosy and physical deformities were seen as a punishment from God. The leper had faith, or at least hope, that Jesus could cure him of his disease. Cured of leprosy he could show himself to the priest and make the offering prescribed by Moses. That would allow him to return to his family, friends and community and would be a sign to them that “I am not a sinner.” He must have felt much like we feel when we avail ourselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and know that Jesus, through the person of the priest, understands our sorrow for our sin and loves us unconditionally. When was the last time we sought the graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Sadly, for most Catholics, the answer is “Too long!” Do we have the same faith, or at least hope, of the leper who approached Jesus?

February 18, 2018
First Sunday of Lent
Mark 1:12-15

Option 1

**“The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert,
and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.”**

St. Mark tells us that the Spirit drove Jesus into the desert. But what desert? It could have been the Negev Desert south of Jerusalem or the desert east of the Dead Sea [in modern day Jordan]. In either desert food and water would have been scarce and there was the constant danger of wild animals, poisonous snakes and creepy crawly critters. In the desert Jesus had the joy of solitude to be alone with God. We live in a culture that does not value silence and solitude to listen for God to speak his will for us. Are we reluctant to be alone with God because we fear what he

might ask of us. Lent is a good time to ask God for the gift of solitude and to make time for periods of silence so we can be with our God. We will learn that solitude is a beautiful gift so we can listen to the Giver. When Jesus learned that John the Baptist had been arrested, he understood it was time for him to proclaim the Kingdom of God. If we make time for solitude God may tell us to proclaim the Kingdom of God. “Be still and know I am your God.”

Option 2

“Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

The devil’s temptation of Jesus in the desert took place at the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus chose to continue the message of John the Baptist to *Repent* and added *Believe in the gospel*. Jesus could not have been referring to the Gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Some of them had not yet encountered Jesus and Scripture scholars tell us that the earliest writing of the Gospels was 40 - 50 years after the Resurrection. And Jesus, who spoke in Aramaic, would not have used the term *gospel*, which is an Old English word meaning *good news*. Jesus knew the consistent message in the Torah to *love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength AND to love or neighbor as ourselves*. That is what God wanted of us from the moment of creation. That is what the prophets repeatedly reminded the Israelites. That is what Jesus lived and taught. Imagine a world in which everyone is doing that. Imagine if we were doing that. How are we doing?

**February 25, 2018
Second Sunday of Lent
Mark 9:2-10**

Option 1

“Peter said, ‘Rabbi, it is good that we are here!’

Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”

Jesus, with Peter, James and John, made the strenuous climb to the top of Mount Tabor, a craggy, cone shaped mountain. To the southwest across the lush Jezreel Valley is Meggido, where Revelation prophesies Armageddon, the final battle between good and evil. To the north are Nazareth where Mary consented to be the Mother of the Messiah; and Cana, where Mary tells the servants to “Do whatever he tells you.” In this context Jesus appears totally different, standing with Moses the “Great Lawgiver” and Elijah, the “Great Prophet. He reveals his mission as Messiah and the consequences he will suffer. Peter, filled with amazement and confusion, proposes to stay in the safety and comfort on top of the mountain. Jesus leads them off of the mountain to help him fulfill his mission. We may never visit the top of Mount Tabor, but Jesus challenges us to step out of our comfort zone and help him fulfill his mission. Lent is a time to recall and reflect on the life and mission of Jesus, and to choose to follow and imitate him.

Option 2

“This is My Beloved Son, Listen to Him!”

According to tradition the “Transfiguration” took place on top of Mount Tabor, a craggy, cone shaped mountain across the lush Jezreel Valley from both Nazareth and Cana. Jesus is with three

of his friends when they see him appear quite different and standing with Elijah, the great prophet, and Moses, the great lawgiver. From the clouds they hear a voice proclaim “This is my beloved son, listen to him.” God was telling Peter, James and John, and He is telling us, to get to know Jesus. Learn all you can about him so you can imitate him. Learn about him now so when the opportunity presents itself, you can be like Jesus without hesitation. Earlier, at a wedding feast in Cana, Mary told servants to “Do whatever he tells you.” The message from both the earthly mother of Jesus and his Heavenly Father is very simple: “Listen to Him!” and “Do whatever he tells you!” Peter and the others wanted to stay in the comfort and safety of the top of the mountain. Are we willing to get out of our comfort zone to “Do whatever he tells you.”