

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

March 1, 2020
First Sunday of Lent
Matthew 4:1-11

Option 1

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.”

It is difficult to understand how the devil could tempt Jesus, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, in the desert, and then take him to three places to offer him rewards if He will bow down and worship the devil. Consider the places: the desert, a place of seclusion; the parapet of the temple, the highest point of the building that contained the Tablets with the Ten Commandments; a very high mountain, the place where people in the time of Jesus believed they were closest to God. The devil tempts Jesus with financial security of an unending supply of bread; power to amaze and influence the hearts and minds of people; and power over the lives and destiny of others. Jesus responds by commanding Satan to worship and serve God alone. Through the story of the Temptation Jesus warns us about the things that will tempt us to choose not to worship and serve God, and gives us an example of how to respond.

Option 2

“If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread”

In Ch. 2 of his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI reflects on the temptation of Jesus: *“This demand for proof is a constantly recurring theme in the story of Jesus’ life; again and again he is reproached for having failed to prove himself sufficiently; for having failed to work that great miracle that will remove all ambiguity . . . And we make the same demand on God and Christ and his Church throughout the whole of history. ‘If you exist God,’ we say, ‘then you will just have to show yourself.’”* Then, in a challenge to examine our own conscience, Benedict asks, *“Is there anything more tragic, is there anything more opposed to belief in the existence of a good God and a Redeemer of mankind, than world hunger?”* Jesus left to us the responsibility to preach his message and to carry on his mission. St. Francis of Assisi challenged us, to *“Preach the Gospel to all the world, and if necessary, use words.”* Are we like the devil who tempted Jesus by demanding a sign? Or, are we a living sign that Jesus is the Redeemer; our Redeemer?

March 8, 2020

Second Sunday in Lent
here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”
Gospel Mt 17:1-9

Option 1

“If you wish, I will make three tents

Scripture scholars have queried why Jesus took only Peter, James and John with him up a high mountain by themselves. Did they have special rolls or importance among his disciples? Did he trust only these three to experience his transfiguration and be seen in the presence of Moses and Elijah? Or were they the only three who were available on that day? What matters is the new understanding of Jesus that these three disciples gained when they saw him in a new light in the presence of the Great Law Giver and the Great Prophet, and realized that Jesus is the Son of God in whom God is well pleased. Most importantly, they heard God say, “Listen to him.” That command from God is reminiscent of the last words Mary speaks in Scripture when she instructs the servants at the Wedding Feast of Cana, “Do whatever he tells you.” The message to us today is the same. Listen to Jesus and do whatever he tells us. To do that we must frequently read and reflect on Scripture.

Option 2

“Rise, and do not be afraid.”

Jesus spoke these words to Peter, James and John who were freighted when they saw Jesus transfigured and conversing with Moses and Elijah. Tradition holds that the Transfiguration occurred atop Mt. Tabor, a cone shaped, craggy mountain that juts up from the floor of the Jezreel Valley and overlooks Armageddon, the place of the final battle between good and evil. Lest we be too harsh on the three disciples for their fear and misinterpretation of the event, let us confess that we would probably have been half way down that craggy mountain before Peter spoke his first word. That whole event on Mt Tabor is a reminder to us that we are constantly engaged in our own Armageddon - our personal struggle between good and evil, trying to fulfill our responsibility to be all that God created us to be and to do all that God gave us the talents, abilities and gifts to do. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we fail. But when we lay prostrate before Jesus, filled with fear and anxiety, we hope to hear him say, “Rise and do not be afraid.” And then, “Good and faithful steward, come into my kingdom.”

March 15, 2020
Third Sunday of Lent
John 4:5-42

Option 1

“Come see a man who told me everything I have done.

Could he possibly be the Christ?”

Imagine an encounter with someone “who told me everything I have done.” That would be very impressive but could also be embarrassing and uncomfortable. We all have things in our life we would rather be kept secret. The Samaritan woman was at the well at noon to get her daily ration of water. Other women probably went to the well early in the morning. Jesus would have understood that she was trying to avoid the other women who gossiped about her because she had

five husbands, and was not married to the man she was with. Jesus did not avoid or reject her. Instead, he ask her for a drink and offers her the waters of eternal life. He ask nothing of her but true sorrow for the sin in her life. God knows the sin in our life and ask only that we acknowledge and sincerely seek to avoid that sin in the future. That is how we are stewards of all the good God has given us.

Option 2

“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me.”

As Jesus traveled with his disciples between Galilee and Jerusalem they stopped at Jacob’s Well at Sychar (Shechem) in the center of Samaria, approximately thirty miles north of Jerusalem. They would have been walking since dawn. The hour was about noon, the hottest part of the day, a good time to stop for food and drink and to seek shade. The disciples go off in search of food while Jesus has a conversation with a woman at the well. He tells her of a “spring of water welling up to eternal life” and that those who drink will never thirst. Naturally, she wants such water. When the disciples return and offer him food, Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me.” Those are strange words indeed. But the woman understands that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is the wellspring of eternal life and that He is sustained by discerning and doing the will of God. Have we figured that out? Do we truly desire to drink from the spring of water welling up to eternal life? Do we earnestly try to discern and do the will of God?

March 22, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Lent

John 9:1-41

Option 1

**Jesus said to the Pharisees, “If you were blind, you would have no sin;
But now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.”**

Socrates observed, “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” Throughout history people have been harmed or killed, and resources have been wasted, by people in power who were too ignorant to know what they did not know and people who know what they promote or impose on others is not true, but do it for reasons of prestige or profit or power. Jesus knew that the Pharisees, and the more powerful Sadducees, imposed laws and requirements on the uneducated people that they either knew, or were not certain, were not what God intended but served their own purposes. The false teaching that illness or injuries were a sign of punishment from God is an example. Jesus healed the man blind from birth to challenge that teaching and the wisdom of those who used it to control and oppress people. Do we have the wisdom to know that there is much about God and our Catholic faith that we do not know? Are we wise enough to accept that we must constantly seek truth? Jesus expects nothing less.

Option 2

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents? ”

Jesus answered: “Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made

visible through him.” Blindness or birth defects were thought to be punishment for either the disabled person or the parents. Most disabled people had to beg. In parts of the world they still do. Jesus cured the man’s blindness, which caused fear among the Jewish leaders. They realized Jesus was demonstrating that the man’s blindness was not a sign of his sin or his parents, but that his need to beg was a sign of the sin of the many people, particularly the Jewish leaders, who refused to share God’s gifts to them to help the blind man. Jesus has an unpleasant encounter with the Pharisees and concludes by saying, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.” They suffered from a self inflicted spiritual and moral blindness. **There are none so blind as those who will not see.** Now, do *we* see????

March 29, 2020
Fifth Sunday in Lent
John 11:1-45

Option 1

“Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may *believe*.” When Jesus first learned that Lazarus was ill he said, “This illness will not end in death, but is for the glory of God.” The disciples were still learning about Jesus, and from him. They did not understand all that he did and said. But they **believed** in him. When Jesus announced he was going to Lazarus, the disciples knew he would have to pass near Jerusalem where the Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him. Thomas says, “Let us also go die with him.” He **believed** in Jesus **before** he fully understood him. When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Martha came out to greet him and lamented that he had not come sooner to save her brother. Before Jesus went to call Lazarus forth from the tomb, he asked Martha, “Do you **believe** in me?” She said, “Yes Lord, I **have come to believe** that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is to come into the world.” She **believed** in Jesus **before** he fulfilled her desire. Do we **believe** in Jesus before we fully understand him, before he fulfills our desire? How do we demonstrate that **belief**?

Option 2

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, a small village approximately four miles southeast of Jerusalem, he received that greeting from both Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. Their greetings reveal both faith and doubt; faith that Jesus could have prevented the death of Lazarus and doubt that he could now do anything about it. Jesus understood. Jesus taught Martha and Mary what he would later teach Thomas, “Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe”(John 21:27). If we do not occasionally doubt our faith, we may not have a faith to doubt. Jesus uses this whole episode to teach all of us that we must be good stewards of our faith. When we have doubts, do we let them linger and fester, or do we try to resolve them by seeking the counsel of our clergy, studying the teachings of our Church, or discussing them with a spiritual director or someone we can trust? If not, we may sink deeper into our doubt and jeopardize our faith.