

Today is the First Sunday of Lent, which, of course, culminates in the Triduum and the celebration of the resurrection of God at Easter.....Today also marks the first day of meteorological Spring.....As Winter begins to leave us, we look forward to the brighter, warmer days of Spring.....This coming Saturday night, or actually very early Sunday morning, we turn our clocks ahead one hour, allowing us to have sunshine and light in our early evenings....The resurrection of God, the start of Spring, and more light during our day all move us in an uplifting, positive direction.

Last week, Abdel mentioned that the readings were very challenging to him....Unfortunately, our readings this evening don't, exactly, take us in a positive direction and again are a bit challenging.....In our First Reading from Genesis, we hear part of the Creation Narrative....It's a story that we can struggle with a little bit....A story that focuses on the "creation of man", not the spectrum of genders or even the binary concept of man and woman....Although the narrative talks about women in the form of Eve, it depicts her as the first sinner and as someone who tempts the male gender.....Where this reading does not go is to depict Eve in a positive light as the first woman—the first of many wonderful, powerful, caring women who have gifted this world of ours....The woman who was, in fact, the mother of all creation....Rather than depict her as woman, as mother, as creator—the Genesis narrative chooses to focus on her as a sinner and one who succumbs to temptation....I invite you as we move through our Lenten journey to think of Eve in a new light, in a positive light—Woman, Creator, Mother.....Imagine how strong and powerful Eve must have been to take on the role of mother of all human creation and to be the first human woman on this earth.

Our Second Reading from Romans allows us to have a bit of positive take on things but first puts as through some tough hurdles....It looks at

sin entering the world through one man and then condemning all of us for it....We hear “through one transgression came the condemnation of all”Later in the reading though, we start to hear a more positive message, although a message that we may still struggle with....That message is “through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all.” I don’t know about you but the word that I struggle with there is the word “righteous”We have seen others, and perhaps ourselves, hurt as LGBTQI people by those who have “righteous indignation”For whatever reason, my mind goes to the Jerry Farwell’s and the Jimmy Swaggart’s of the world, who have condemned our community with their own righteousness.....When I hear that word, my first thoughts are “narrow minded” “I’m better than you” and “condemner”Perhaps though we can look at this reading a little bit differently....Maybe we can say that as we try to do the “right thing” “the good thing” that we work on making the lives of others a better place.....Our obedience to a loving, nurturing, and inclusive God allows us to offer love, care, and a welcoming presence to all of God’s children.

Finally, we hear in tonight’s Gospel, the story of Jesus who was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert, put to the test, and tempted by the devil.

Being left in the desert is a bit scary....I tend to think of the desert as a place of loneliness, isolation, and a place where one can become very weary....When have we been left in the desert in our lives? Are we there now? Was there a point earlier in our lives when we were left in the desert? Are we worried about a time in the future when we might be left there?

And while we are in this desert, what are we tempted by? How are we put to the test?

How do we come out of the desert doing the “right thing” as we talked about in the Second Reading? How do we come out of the desert making the lives of others as well as our own lives a better place?

There is no better time than during this season, the season of Lent, to reflect and begin to take the action of coming out of this desert.

Often times, as we start Lent, we think about what we can give up (chocolate, dessert) or what we can take on (Friday Night Supper Program, helping the homeless).....Those are fine things and they may make perfect sense for you.

As an alternative though, I invite you to think of those things that we can do that help us get out of the desert.....They may, in fact, be things that we haven't thought of before....Instead of our minds immediately going to giving up something or doing service, it might make sense for us to think of doing something for ourselves this Lent, and not to feed into the “guilt” that we sometimes feel when we do do something for ourselves.

Here just a few thoughts:

Join a group to help with my addiction to alcohol.

Check myself every time I have a negative thought about myself.

Come out to others as I work to show my authentic self.

Talk less. Listen more. Perhaps listening to a political perspective that is much different than our own.

Work of my addiction to sex.

Check my thoughts about sex, gender identity, religion, age, people with disabilities, and those with or without status.

How do we work on ourselves to come out of the desert and be stronger for ourselves and ultimately others?

Let us work toward the goal of showing ourselves as people coming out of the darkness of winter into the blossoming of spring

As people taking on less darkness and more light

As a resurrection people.

Amen! Good news!