



First Week of Lent (Year B): 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“Lord, make me know your ways”**

On Ash Wednesday I quoted these words of Pope Francis from his Homily for the Day: “The Ashes on our head remind us that we are dust...yet, upon this dust of ours, God blew His Spirit of Life. So, we should no longer live our lives chasing dust, chasing things that are here today and gone tomorrow.” That is what our Lenten practices are meant to help us with. Pope Francis has a wonderful way of hitting the nail on the head, and of giving us Priests words that people will remember, and ponder.

This year the Gospel readings are from St Mark (it is Year B selection of readings). St Mark’s Gospel, you will note, does not enter into the detail of Jesus’ temptations; the desert/wilderness experience of Our Lord comes directly after His Baptism by John and before His ministry begins in Galilee.

The Temptations of the Devil are something we all experience in life and, as with His Baptism, Jesus stands alongside us: like us he was tempted to chase after things that are here today and gone tomorrow rather than what endures. He was beginning the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Mark tells us He said “the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the good news.” The saving intervention of God was operative through Jesus’ preaching, teaching and miracles. Lent is the time the Church sets aside for us to step back from our obsessions, to become aware of ourselves, of our inner life, “when the seeds of God’s word are planted anew” says Earnest Ferlita in his Reflections, “and, finding good soil, break open and yield life, soon to bud forth and flower and bear fruit”. He begins by focusing on the word “Lent” which comes from an Old English word meaning springtime. I find myself looking for evidence of spring on my walks, looking for the buds of new life, cherishing it and proclaiming it. Recently, I received a memory on Facebook: it was a picture I had posted of spring flowers this time last year. We hear much these days of habitats for plants and spring flowers: the need to have the right conditions created. Similarly, with our inner life: there is a need to create the right conditions through prayer, especially with Scripture to help; being less selfish for material things and caring for others; and putting God first in our lives.

With this renewed focus on the priorities given to us in the Kingdom that Jesus established, we will see the fruit that He promises in the Gospels.

So, Lent is a time for planting and sowing in a spiritual sense too. Jesus has stood alongside us in facing the temptations that are part of life today, as they were in His time. And, he invites us to reflect on the new life we received in Baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us anew to a life that is closer to His, the way he taught, and that we reflect on in the Sunday Scripture Readings.

**Monsignor Daniel McHugh**

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese

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I spoke especially to families on Ash Wednesday suggesting they consider together the practices the Church encourages in Lent: coming to a decision as a family as to what extra prayer to do together; thinking about what food to fast from; and resolving who or what cause the family might give alms to. I'm sure there will be some nice surprises from the children, and it will be an enriching way to go forward with the Church to make this Lent a special one.

It was the Holy Spirit of God that drove Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days. We too must open up our lives in prayer to the Holy Spirit who made us Children of God at Baptism; He can renew us and enable us to flourish as we come to the celebration of new life at Easter.

This Lent time we pray, as we do in the Psalm this Sunday: "Lord, make me know your ways, Lord teach me your paths." And with Pope Francis we pray O'God "upon this dust of ours, blow your "Spirit of Life."

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