

Assumption/St. Paul

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St. Peter the Apostle Parish

Daily Reflection By Fr. Jim Kane

The First Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2010

We've begun our Lenten journey of 40 days.
It is no accident that the Church chose 40 days:

- The Covenant between God & Noah, with the sign of the rainbow, ended 40 days of the Flood
- The Covenant between God & Israel, was prepared for by Moses spending 40 days on Sinai, preparing to receive the "Torah", including the 10 Commandments
- The Hebrews wandered 40 years in the desert, from slavery in Egypt, to the Promised land of Israel
- Prophet Ezekiel walked 40 days into the desert, escaping wicked Queen Jezebel
- Prophet Jonah spent 40 days calling the Ninivhites to repent[his initial reluctance to do so got him in a fish]
- The Scribe Ezra dictated for 40 days the Hebrew Scriptures (O.T. books) for a new generation of Jews
- Jesus in the desert fasted 40 days (today's Gospel), preparing for his public ministry.

And so, the Church gives us these 40 days of Lent to prepare for Easter and 40 days after Easter, we celebrate Ascension Thursday.

These Lenten 40 days are a kind of tithing of the year (a little more than 10% of the days of our lives), 'time out' of our ordinary routine, to "turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel," as we heard when we received ashes on Ash Wednesday.

Maximus, the 1st Bishop of Turin (where the Winter Olympics were held in 2006), gives us this sermon (from the 4th century) on the 40 days of Lent:

"My friends, what is the use of observing this Lenten fast of 40 days without reflecting upon the meaning of what we are doing?"

What, for example, is the use of denying ourselves banquets, but then spending time in endless litigation?

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What is the use of not eating the bread we possess, if we persist in stealing what belongs to the poor?

A Christian's fast ought to be fostering peace, not quarrels.

What advantage is there to making one's stomach holy with fasting while defiling our lips with lies?

My brothers & sisters in Christ, you will be able to come to church with integrity only if your feet are not entangled in the snares of usury.

You will have the right to pray only if envy is not eating your heart within you.

The money you give away to the poor will be given in all righteousness only if you have not extorted what you are giving away from somebody else who is poor.

So, let us imitate, as far as possible, the fasting of Christ by practicing the virtues. In so doing, grace may come upon us through the two-fold fasting of body and spirit."

"Repent and believe in the Gospel," so that Lent 2010 will be a holy journey of faith to Easter.