

Trinity News

Lent I Following Christ in the Wilderness and the Wonder of Being Fully Alive

John of the Cross, still one of our best guides in the spiritual life, placed the person and life of Jesus Christ at the center of his counsels: “Habitually desire to imitate Jesus Christ in all you do by bringing your life into conformity with his.” Therefore, “Any reformation of behaviour or discipline that we undertake to purify our beings is born from a personal relationship of love with Jesus Christ and rooted in the imitation of his life.”

“We cannot pray seriously and the same time malign our sisters and brothers or engage in self-destructive behaviour. The spiritual life calls for dedication to God and service to others expressed in concrete behaviour”. When we read such a quote we know immediately that we cannot live up to it in any complete sense. To do so we must consciously order our moral conduct, practise loving kindness and consistently consider others. Our model is Christ, and in him we find little bitterness, no traces of ego and compassionate engagement with all people. This did not rule out strong words or even rebukes. But we sense that everything that he did was for the betterment of the other person even when the words were forceful. We cannot belittle another person and serve Christ at the same time. It is interesting that when we are at our most compassionate we tend to speak more clearly and courageously with true intent.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is also our testing as well. The word used for “temptation” in the text means “testing with an end in view”. Jesus said nothing about God breaking our will or our resolve. We are tested every day by the example of Jesus in the midst of what happens to us. The Letter to the Hebrews shows us the compassionate Christ, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15). This latter comment does not mean that sinful thoughts did not enter Jesus’ mind since that make him less human than us. But it does mean that deep spiritual discipline enabled him to reject such thoughts. With this qualification we can speak of his sinlessness without minimizing his humanity.

Temptations come from the dark side of humanity. We may label it as “the shadow” or “negative tendencies” or “evil enticements”. God tempts no one, but we are surely tested every day. Christ endured forty days and nights of testing and temptation in the wilderness. He was tested by God and tempted by the Devil. The Devil is like the dark side of the humanity magnified into supernatural breadth, intensity and power. We can invite it in through repeated negative thoughts, words and deeds, but the Wounded Healer at the Cross is our own healing and forgiveness when we invite him into our every day affairs. I would like to say that after walking through many Lenten, this one reminds me more than ever of the wilderness testing of our spiritual heart and the wonder of God’s healing love at the Cross and its vindication in the Resurrection.

With love on the Lenten Pilgrimage to the Cross and Beyond.
Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.
- Lenten Study, 7:30 p.m., Parish Office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00 a.m., Chapel

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS:

Genesis 22:1-14; Psalm 16; Romans 8:31-39; Mark 8:31-38
