

## SUNDAY REFLECTIONS – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday LENT - 10 MARCH 2019



What Messiah is Jesus to be?

*Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.*

*He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, one does not live on bread alone."*

*Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."*

*Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you, and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him in reply,*

*"It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.*

### Some points to ponder:

'The more desperate the world becomes, the more intimate and determined becomes the life-sustaining embrace of God... We hear God's word: 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground' (Exod. 3:5).

The whole world is now holy ground. We must remove our sandals. Grace is barefoot... Jesus -- crucified, barefoot, the shattered, broken Christ -- speaks to the shattered, broken world. The cross is the most holy ground before which the very sandals of God are removed.' [Kosuke Koyama]

Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right?



And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because it is right.

**[Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.]**

We see in the temptations the drive to substitute the fullness of life for self-centredness and greed; obsession with reputation and power, the need to control and manipulate; the temptation to a small, safe, comfortable and conventional life.

Jesus is tempted to show his stuff and muster his magic. When presented with political power in the world, Jesus reserves glory for God alone. That power is clearly reflected in military spending, the manufacture and sale of arms, making and laying of landmines, development of nuclear weapons; environmental destruction, use of vengeance and revenge as some idiotic way of making peace. Though billions of dollars and pounds and Euros are spent on bombs, only some will be used. But they all explode – they explode in peoples’ faces: the faces of millions who are hungry, homeless, lack education or decent health care, have no food, no shelter, no education, no decent health care. The revolution that overthrew the Mubarak regime showed us something about the power of nonviolence. If people can, through nonviolence, overcome such a regime then we might ask why the great powers still need to resort to military might to attempt change in our world.

The 40 days of Lent invite us deeper into the journey of non-violence, to walk more closely with Jesus to the cross of non-violent resistance to empire and suffering love for humanity. As we begin this year's holy season of Lent, I hear the Ash Wednesday blessing,

‘Repent of the sin of war and believe the Gospel of Peace’ as a call to renounce the violence within us and around us, breathe again the new life of non-violence, surrender ourselves to God's reign of peace, and walk forward with Jesus on the road to peace.

Jesus focuses on loving and serving God rather than violently beating ‘the tempter’ by outsmarting him. Jesus offers an alternative way to the way of power and domination of the world. The sin of the ‘first humans’ was to reject their humanness. Jesus would not step outside the confines of humanity. Even when ‘good ends’ were dangled in front of him, Jesus resisted displays of control, power, domination and manipulation.

He preferred to draw people to himself by remaining faithful to his full identification with us which began at his baptism when he stepped into the waters of the Jordan with the rest of those people there. Jesus says 'Yes' to another world – a world of justice and integrity; a world of human life and dignity; a world of acceptance and inclusiveness.

#### Four goals for Lent:

- First, to purify our own hearts.
- Second, to ask for forgiveness for participating in the violence of war by our silence.
- Third, to educate Catholics, especially our young, on the non-violent teachings and life of Jesus.
- Fourth, to encourage one another to fast and pray for peace for the duration of the Lenten season, and to speak out against war.

As the media proclaims the season of electoral politics, Lent invites us into something much deeper, into ongoing personal, social, economic and political conversion, into the God of peace and God's reign of peace and justice.

Make the most of this Lenten season, that it will bear good fruit in the Easter gift of peace, and that ‘perhaps God will leave behind a blessing.’

