

Homily by Father Jon Pedigo

Pastor, St. Julie Billiard Parish – San Jose, CA.

<p style="text-align: center;">Jesus is tempted by the devil in the desert.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 26:4-10 Romans 10:8-13 Luke 4:1-13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">February 25, 2007 1st Sunday of Lent</p> 
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One of my favorite junk-TV genres is TV entertainment programs where a house is made over. In a few short hours, a crew of professionals come in and turn a musty old basement into a state-of-the-art, mini-disco complete with a dance floor and twinkling glass ball. There are other makeover shows which I confess only to watching because I am on the treadmill at the gym. On the screen above the elliptical machine, typically I see a person with a haircut from Cuts-Are-Us and a wardrobe from a chain store given a “fashion makeover” complete with a fancy hair style and new clothes. Hours of transformation are compressed into 30 minutes. “Before” and “After” shots make it seem as if almost anyone could be “made over.” Makeovers, according to these shows, are relatively easy and fun.

For those of us who do not live in TV-land, and face reality daily know that any process of transformation involves long hours and hard work and not everyone is successful at being made over. A spiritual makeover cannot be condensed into a “before” and “after” narrative. I have come to believe that the spiritual life is far more nuanced than fashion tips. The key to a successful spiritual makeover is dealing with temptation and sin. Today I want to talk about sin and temptation as a struggle between personal self-preservation and self-surrender.

Today's gospel of the temptation of Christ in the desert shows us that at the essence of Christ's humanity, is self-surrender.

Our faith tradition teaches us that Christ is human in all things but sin. Self-surrender is the opposite of sin. Sin seeks to maintain privilege of the self over the well-being of our neighbor. Sin is the idol-making of our egos, the construction of our own "Tower of Babel" where our "Tower" is a tower of our own accomplishments rather than God's grace.

The Tower of Babel is a monument to our egos which tell us we made something without God. He has become redundant and therefore replaceable. In other words, we have "outsourced" God.

Another way of looking at sin is how it affects our way of seeing.

Sin obscures our vision so that we fail to recognize the "other" as our sister or brother. Sin looks at everyone as a stranger, a potential rival or enemy. In this instance, sin blinds us and incapacitates our inner-sight so much that the commandment to love our neighbor is impossible. Sin makes self-preservation the only viable option.



How easily we fall into temptation to build a Tower of Babel and to see anyone who isn't like us as a stranger, a rival, or a potential enemy. How easy it is to go to war, torture a prisoner, or build a wall. We must pray, "lead us not into temptation," to get out of this pit of self-preservation. Let us turn now to Christ in today's gospel passage.

The Spirit led Christ into the desert to be tempted by sin, but rather than accept every day bread, personal power, and world domination, Christ accepted self-surrender. His self-surrender eventually resulted in the way of the cross that gave the Cosmos eternal life.

Every day we are confronted with the choice of self-preservation and self-surrender. Our desert might be a cubicle, a classroom, a boardroom, a laboratory, a construction site, or a shopping mall. Satan might not tempt us with bread or the kingdoms of the world, but Satan might tempt us to look the other way instead of doing the right thing. Satan tempts us to keep silent rather than speak up. We are tempted to preserve the status quo rather than sacrifice our convenience.

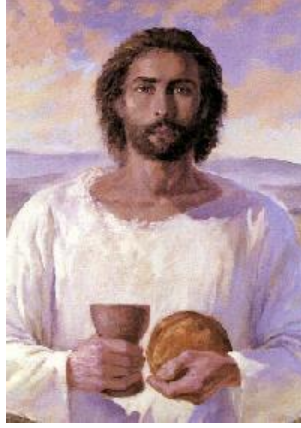


A spiritual makeover takes time - for most of us, a life time. Lent is our annual retreat that puts us in better touch with our spiritual journey. Lent is a time of grace because in this season, we can talk

about our failures, but in a positive light – not in shame. Failing allows us to reach outwards towards God and say, “Ok, God. I am not cut out to be a saint. Help me in this time of trial.”

When we reach out and admit our failure, we have taken that first step toward relying on God and letting go of relying on self.

We gain wisdom each time we “let go and let God.” We learn through our experience that God saves and in saving us, God deepens within us a love of neighbor.



This journey is, as I said before, is a lifetime journey. On this journey we require our daily bread, but not in the sense of the bread of self-preservation, but rather the Eternal Bread, Christ himself, the Bread for the Journey of Life. Eucharist is this bread and Eucharist teaches us that a successful, beautiful life is measured by justice and compassion, not by privilege, power, or dominance.

Let us then share in the ultimate makeover which is Christ Jesus himself.

Reflection Questions:

1) If you could change something about yourself, what would it be?

What would be your motivation for wanting to change?

2) Do you agree or disagree with the statement, "Lent is a time of grace because in this season, we can talk about our failures...in a positive light..." ?

3) What is your greatest temptation? How do you deal with that temptation?

What happens if you fail in resisting that temptation?