

Lent 1, 17/2/2013, Holy Trinity
Luke 4:1-13

I say, "It's Lent again."

You say, "Not again! We are just getting over Christmas and the New Year. Can't we give Lent a miss this year?"

"Well, no" is the answer.

Some of us can still feel the ash cross on our forehead from Wednesday and this spoke to us about sin and repentance "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return."

These words mean very little or nothing to the majority of people.

Ash Wednesday and Lent are not in the vocabulary of most people as they go about daily living.

But for us sin, repentance and salvation have meaning, but do we have to think of them for forty days?

"Sin" is a bit like a bit of the ash from Ash Wednesday that gets into the corner of the eye – it is annoying and it can be rubbed away.

It is no big deal and I don't want to talk about it or be reminded that it still exists in every one of us.

Now, in this morning's Gospel we hear the story of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness but his temptations or testing do not lead to sin.

I share with you a number of things that come to me from to-day's Gospel.

First, there is the humanity of Jesus. "Sir, we would see Jesus".

We see his humanity and as we venture further into his life we see his absolute obedience to God the Father and we see his own divinity.

He is tempted as we are.

Secondly, the reading gives the message that no one is exempt from the power of the tempter.

We are all vulnerable to temptation and age does not stop the temptation: what tempts us simply changes.

Thirdly, the temptation often preys on our goodness.

The tempter does not show as a serpent offering fruit, or as having horns and a tail and carrying a pitchfork or wearing a nametag.

For Jesus and for us the voice of the tempter often looks like the voice of good.

“Take care of yourself.” “Save the world.” “Prove your faith.”

They all look good in themselves.

For many, the idea of a temptation is an irresistible urge to do something that they already know is wrong, like the drug addict who holds up a club, shop or service station to obtain money to feed the habit, or the lonely husband who spends more and more time with the attractive co-worker.

This is the stuff that we know is wrong but to which we are drawn anyway.

But as we look at this Gospel reading we can look at Lent as a time to examine the temptations that don't look like temptations at all.

These are the most dangerous temptations because they sound like good, or coming from the voice of God.

For example, we want to make a difference for good in the world and what a good idea it is.

We want, however, for the changes to be according to our liking.

Consequently, we do not care where our food comes from, or the circumstances in which it is grown as long as we are able to buy it all year round and at the cheapest price.

We give little or no thought for the farmers of Australia who are struggling against overseas imports and the big supermarket chains.

Do we care enough for our close neighbours to make deliberate choices in relation to our shopping habits?

Then there is the consideration of the ethics involved in much food production and of the labelling of the country of origin.

Jesus' second temptation may make us think about what we feel that we must own.

Does our lifestyle come before our consideration of God?

These are some of the things for us to consider during Lent.

Now for a summary: in looking at Jesus' humanity there is radical, blind obedience to the Father and in looking at ourselves during this Lent look for the temptations that come our way.

There are those that stand out as temptations that we know to be wrong from the start then there are others that look like good but which are real temptations that require us to think about them before we are caught 'hook, line and sinker'.

May God give us the grace to discern the temptation for what it is and the grace to follow Jesus in radical, blind obedience to God's will.