

Pastor's Corner - March 13 - Lent a time to evaluate my choices

Last Sunday Jesus invited us in Matthew's Gospel (7:21-27) to build our faith, our house on rock: "the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew ...but it did not fall." We know all too well that faith is no guarantee that we will not have to deal with storms of one kind or another in our lives. So Jesus invited us to make his words our home where we can find shelter, warmth, safety, strength: "my word will never let you down." He is inviting us to make those important as well as those every day choices which will show that we live in and are nourished by his words. In God's words we can find warmth and the healing which comes from the assurance that God accepts us as we are when we fail. In God's words we can find strength, that grace we need and which God freely gives to all of us when we need it, so that we might stand firm on solid ground in hard times.

As human beings we are given that blessing and that responsibility which allows us to make choices, either life-giving choices or destructive choices. Not all choices in life are equal. It is not as if we are faced with a kind of pot luck brunch similar to the delicious and wonderful brunch which the Phillipino community organized several Sundays ago! We cannot just pick and choose something here, something there! In life some choices will bring us closer to God and to our fellow human beings, others will do the opposite. Some choices may not seem very attractive to us and yet they have that wonderful result of bringing us closer to God and others. Lent can be a time when we are called to evaluate our choices. That is why it is a desert experience and that is why we are called to be desert people (cf. the pastor's corner of last week, March 6). In the beautiful parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32) we can find hidden a desert experience. The prodigal son chose what he wanted and lived through his decision in misery before discovering his inner self in solitude: "Coming to his senses he thought ... I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you..." Only after that desert experience was he able to make a real life-giving decision. We are not any different. We all have our own desert experience: I need to pass through and abandon whatever enslaves and distracts me because I cannot enter the promised land of true freedom and happiness unless I go through the desert, my desert!

On this first Sunday in Lent we first see in Genesis how humans are being tempted by the devil and then how Jesus being tempted by the devil in the same way: to allow the best to be replaced by the mere good and that way to succumb to mediocrity. Each time the devil is trying to show that one can seek God's ends by means unworthy of God; kind of by taking all kinds of short cuts! However, unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus each time makes it clear to the devil: my relationship with God is the most important; only God can fulfill me; all my needs are met by God's love and care; there I find my true freedom, there I find my real happiness! St. Paul in the second reading to the Christians in Rome calls it obedience: "Just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all people, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all people. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19)."

May our Lenten journey bring me to the same conclusion as Jesus': only God can fulfill me; all my needs are met by God's love and care!

Shalom.

Fr. Rolf