

1st Sunday of Lent Year B – Feb 18th, 2018

Temptation of Jesus & The Start of His Ministry

Mk 1:12-15

Thank you all for your prayers. My heart did some strange things last weekend and so I had two trips to Abbott Northwestern Hospital in the twin cities, one in a helicopter from Mora and then, after returning home, another trip there in an ambulance from Sandstone. They performed many tests and ruled out the most significant problems and I've been instructed to return to Deacon Jim's normal activities. But, they continue to look for an explanation.

And I am **obeying** my doctor's orders as best I can. I am sure with all of you praying for me, that I am in God's hands. Thanks again.

So, I started Lent a few days early on, "Sacrifice Saturday the 10th" with plenty of fasting and suffering that I offered up to God.

Since Lent started, we should all have our plan underway to improve our path to holiness and thereby work to become the best person we can be. The Church has this season to help us do that ... to take a closer look and dig deeper and find things that we can improve.

Today, I'd like to focus on one thing that ties in with suffering and doctor's visits ... and that would be obedience.... A dirty and difficult word for some as we all want to do what we want to do (Right?)! And, when someone, even if they have the authority and knowledge gives us instructions, we don't necessarily "obey" ... do we? No, after all, today we can look things up on the internet and figure things out for ourselves. Consider a doctor who has gone through many years of medical school, internships, and then the experiences of dealing with many with similar conditions. Do we listen to our doctors? Do we obey their

instructions? Sometimes I felt like telling the doctor ... you don't understand. I know my body best. Or, we come up with arguments to ignore the doctor's instructions ... Oh, heart disease is all genetic, I can eat whatever I want as it won't matter.

Obedience is a virtue. It is related to charity, humility, and patience.

Father John Anthony Hardon defines obedience as: "*The moral virtue that inclines the will to comply with the will of another who has the right to command.*" In other words, we let someone else tell us **what to do**, and then **do** what they tell us, even if we disagree.

I once was in a group with many priests and other religious who had professed vows to chastity, poverty, and obedience including celibate priests. And the question was asked, what is the hardest of these vows to follow. A large percentage agreed that **obedience** is the hardest. Yes, we know better and want to do things our way.

Monsignor Charles Mangan writes:

"Anyone who is serious about reaching Heaven will do all he can to increase in the virtue of obedience. For without it, one will never please the Lord, Yes, we are actually obliged to be obedient -- it is our solemn duty."

Today's Gospel ends at the start of Jesus' ministry and we heard: "*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.*" *Mk: 1:15* Repent from what? From what people do so often - disobey God. In the first reading, we heard about the covenant God established after the flood which destroyed those who disobeyed. And so, Jesus' instructions are meant for us, that we need to obey his teachings. He is the authority.

Father had a wonderful homily 3 weeks ago that is still available off our website. The title was ["Who Has Authority to Teach in the Name of God?"](#) He

explained how we obey all kinds of earthly authority like judges and we follow grandma's recipes, but sometimes miss the mark with Church and Theological Teachers. We think we know better. I encourage you to re-read father's homily and consider this as we consider the virtue of obedience.

Lent is a great time to start practicing obedience if you aren't already doing so. Here are a few examples:

For our children ... St Paul wrote this just for you:

"Children obey, respect and pray for your parents, grateful that God has given you a father and mother." (paraphrased from Ep 6:1) When they say, pick up and clean your room or do your homework or whatever, just do it. Don't delay or complain. Just do it even if you don't want to. Obey your parents and see how happy you can make them.... And that will make you happy, too!

For all of us, we should consider the precepts of the Church. Are we obeying these precepts of the Church ... attending Mass weekly, going to confession, etc.

What about at home, at work, or just driving down the street ...? Are we following the civic laws and rules or cheating a little ... maybe speeding or texting while driving or doing things we are told not to do at work or school?

Lent is a good time to practice obeying, even when the rule or law doesn't seem necessary to us. Follow them anyway. The more we exercise obedience to proper authority, the more we will grow in humility, charity, and patience. Now this doesn't mean we should avoid discernment, but there is proper discernment which isn't just questioning because we want to do things our way and on our schedule. Our tendencies are to satisfy our own desires instead of others.

Father Hardon also wrote: *"As a virtue, (obedience) is pleasing to God because it means the sacrifice of one's will out of love for God."*

So, as we move together through Lent, let us strive to obey and thereby grow ... as we obey Jesus' command, "*Repent, and believe in the Gospel.*"