

1st Sunday of Lent Year B – Feb 18th, 2024

Temptation of Jesus & The Start of His Ministry

Mk 1:12-15

For readings ... see [here](#).

We just heard that Jesus proclaimed: ... **“Repent and Believe in the Gospel!”** This is how Jesus started his ministry ... First, he went into the desert and was tempted. Then, the first direct instruction for us from St Mark’s Gospel is **“Repent and Believe in the Gospel!”** Mk 1:15

The initial words aren’t ... I’m here and you are all saved!! Nope ... he gives us instructions on what we need to do to be saved ... and the first one is repent. This is critical because Jesus can’t grant us his great mercy, unless we repent. From the Catechism, I quote: *“To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*¹

Since Lent started, we should all have our plan underway to improve our path to holiness and thereby continue to work on becoming the best person we can be ... in God’s eyes. The Church has this season to help us do just that ... to take a closer look and dig deeper and find things that we can improve on. And we can all improve! We get stuck in habits and some are not so good. We are all sinners, so we all need to repent.

Today, I’d like to focus on one thing that ties in directly with repentance ... and that would be **obedience....** A dirty and difficult word for some of us ... as

¹ [CCC 1847](#)

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? Father had a wonderful homily 3 weeks ago that is still available on 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. Father concluded his homily with "... in religious matters, it is Christ's Church, the Catholic Church, and it alone, which has the full and complete authority from God to teach accurately and to command justly in religious matters." Why did Jesus come at all or why did he establish his Church? We need to look at the Church who has the authority ... and obey Her. Now, the Church (established by Jesus) provides us with the Catechism which spells out what God wants from us ... in detail... what is sinful and what is virtuous. How well do we know the Catechism ... how well do we know what God wants?

Fr Michael Schmitz's popular podcast, "Catechism in a Year," had its first year in 2023 ... so all 365 sessions are now available and can be used in any order at any time. Fr Mike shows us how incredible God's way is. He does an outstanding job not just reading the words of the Catechism but giving very helpful guidance on how each of us can and should be applying these teachings to help us grow closer to Christ. Each session is about 15 minutes ...

Are we **obeying** everything in the Catechism? The answer is No. ... none of us are ... we all stumble ... yes even Fr Mike admits during some sessions that he needs work ... when he is convicted by teachings in the Catechism.

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

Father John 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. And the Church ... through the Catechism has the authority and the responsibility to command us.

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.”

Once again, the Gospel ended with: "*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 we do so often - disobey God. Jesus' instructions are meant for us, that we need to obey his teachings. He is the authority and His Church shows us the Way.

Lent is a great time to improve and build the virtue of obedience. 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 ... and smile while you do it. 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 and all the teachings of the Church. Are we obeying the Church ... attending Mass weekly, going to confession, ...? If we obey, and smile while we are doing it, we will make God happy and that will make us happy too!

What about at home, at work, or just driving down the street ...? Are we following the civic laws and rules or cheating ... 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. And smile ... because it pleases God. The more we exercise obedience to proper authority, the more we will grow in humility, charity, and patience. But, let's not forget, that virtue rides in the middle. There are extremes to obedience which aren't virtuous so we also need the virtue of prudence. We shouldn't obey authority if it causes us to sin or causes us to not love our neighbor. For example, if a doctor is told by medical authorities to perform immoral procedures, that doctor should disobey. So, each command or law requires proper discernment ... proper discernment isn't just questioning because we want to do things our way and on our schedule. No, we weigh different factors and use all the virtues.

We stumble and don't obey - so we need to repent and ask the Lord's forgiveness through prayer and then using the great sacrament of "Confession"! Don't give up and get frustrated - the Lord is indeed a Merciful Lord!

So, as we move together through Lent, let us strive to continually learn more about what God wants, especially through the Catechism ... and thereby grow ... as we obey Jesus' proclamation, "***Repent, and believe in the Gospel.***"