

1st Lent B 2018 February 17/18 Deacon Kevin Mastellon

How are you coming with your Lenten prayer, alms giving and fasting? I recognize we are only few days into Lent but the routine should be habit by now. Keep it up and good for you.

I saw a post a week ago with a Lenten practice suggestion. You take a clothing item out of your closet or dresser each day of Lent; clothing you know you will never use again and put it in a collection bag. After Lent you have a lot of stuff to take to Urban Mission. That's a pretty good Lenten idea. Or set aside a canned good or non-perishable item each day and take that to the food pantry at Urban Mission. That's good too.

I liked Monsignor's suggestion in his Ash Wednesday homily that we post on the social media of your choice a statement boldly declaring your joy at being a Catholic. Do it every week he suggests...more often won't hurt. Start it with.....

Being Catholic has.....and finish the sentence, or

My Catholic faith has enabled me to.....or

I like being Catholic because.....or

My parents saw to it I was baptized Catholic. Thank God.

That's all...simple sentences. Be creative...be honest. The social media of your choice, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr....whatever....is going to identify you as the author. So you are immediately evangelizing. You are witnessing your faith to everybody who "likes" you....and even some who don't.

That's pretty brave To step up and say out loud, I am Catholic and proud of it. It is pretty much what Jesus told us to do in today's Gospel. Repent and believe in the gospel. Perhaps the minister who placed ashes on your forehead Wednesday used those words....repent and believe in the Gospel. It is one of the phrases that can be used.

Jesus said that after he reminded us the kingdom of God is at hand. The time of fulfillment the Jewish people hoped for has arrived. God is among us...that became and is abundantly clear in Jesus' words and actions...and he is the teacher who said we attain the kingdom of God through repentance and our belief --- laid out for us in the Gospel.

One of the faith statements I suggested earlier was "My parents saw to it I was baptized Catholic. Thank God." St. Peter wrote in his first letter that baptism saves us.

Jesus allowed himself to be baptized by John. John, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preached that union with God is only available through repentance. Jesus accepted that baptism and the consequences the baptism entailed. His consequence came from his preaching and teaching. His baptism would ultimately lead to his arrest, trial, conviction, crucifixion, death...and gloriously his resurrection.

Our baptism demands consequences of us. We face problems, conflicts, struggles, temptations that we just can't seem to shake. Maybe we need to make a desert journey this Lent too; not necessarily to be tempted but to find our way.

We need to find some quiet time to discover where we are in faith. If our habit is to become involved in our faith only during Lent, this is the time to take stock and renew our own baptism, our own faith.

The water in our Holy Water fonts is baptismal water. It reminds us of the saving power of God...of the promise, the covenant God made with us through Noah. God promised to use water for rebirth, for renewal. As Peter said, this prefigured baptism, which saves you now.

Lent is our time for covenant. It is the time for us to promise God we will reorient our lives...make a new beginning if necessary...a time for repentance, rededication to the faith of our baptism, a promise to ourselves and to God to change for the better and live the Good News.

For each of us the goal for this Lent should be to emerge from it a stronger and more vital person of faith than when we entered. It might be helped by bible study, signing on to Best Lent Ever, reading a book like *Perfectly Yourself* that will illuminate your faith.....evangelizing simply and quietly by professing your faith publicly. This is your Lent. This is the Lent for you to repent and believe in the Gospel.