

1st Sunday of Lent 2009, Mark 1:12-:15

(For mass with RCIA Rite of Sending for Catechumens who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil)

Our celebration of the forty days of Lent is of course inspired by the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert being tried and tested.

The first thing that we should recognize as we think about these two things is that our testing is not going to go as well as Jesus's did. Jesus made better use of his forty days in the desert than we will make of the forty days of Lent. He's the Savior of the world, we're the ones in need of saving. We're not quite going to manage to measure up.

I think this shows us the two things that should happen as a result of Lent. And this is true for those who are to be baptized this Easter, and for us who were baptized long ago.

First, we should become more like Jesus.

We should become less attached to the passing things of this world, and more concerned about doing the will of Our Father in Heaven. This should be a season where we grow more capable of saying no to both overindulgence in things that are legitimately good, as well as saying no to sin itself.

Of course Christ was able to do both of these things perfectly, hopefully these next forty days or so will allow us to become less imperfect.

So we should use this time to allow ourselves to be made more like Jesus, but the reality of our shortcomings when it comes to this task shows us the second thing that should happen as a result of our celebration of this Lent.

Our recognition of our complete and total broken dependence on Jesus Christ must grow.

God willing we will become more like Jesus, but we will never become enough like Jesus to deserve to receive the gift of God's salvation.

Hopefully we will continue to experience ever greater freedom from sin, but our freedom from sin will never be great enough that we will cease to need a Savior.

Those who are to be baptized this Easter will receive a great gift which provides tremendous graces, and strength in the fight against sin, but the rest of us here can assure you that the fight against sin continues after baptism.

All of us must remember that Jesus was the sinless one whose resistance to temptation was complete and absolute. We are the sinful ones whose resistance to sin will always be incomplete and partial.

We must realize this and see that Jesus is not primarily our role model, although he is that. He is primarily our Savior, who brings us his forgiveness and his mercy, as we reach out to him in our need and in our weakness.