



**March 10, 2019**

## **FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT**

**GOSPEL LUKE 4:1-13**

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

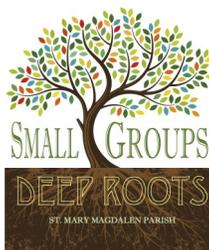
Jesus answered him, "It is written, *One does not live on bread alone.*"

Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me."

Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."

Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you, and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.



Lord, please, I beg you, never let me forget that holiness is possible, and give me the grace and courage to go out into the world and create with you as many Holy Moments as possible. Amen.

March 10, 2019

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### FIRST WEEK OF LENT: DESERT TEMPTATIONS

This first week of Lent, Jesus too gets in the spiritual battle. Why? One reason is to show us how it is done—how to be “the best-version-of-ourselves” as Matthew Kelly famously quotes. Jesus fights in these “desert temptations” all the forces that invite us to be complacent, negligent and lazy. Let’s open up these three classic temptations so we can be better equipped to win our spiritual battles this Lent.

The Devils temptations are nothing new. From the first temptation in the Garden of Eden when Eve looked at the fruit on the tree and saw it “was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom” (Gen 3:6) till now, the devil’s tactics are the same.

1. The first tactic is simple: We all desire physical pleasure and comfort. This desire for physical comfort is symbolized by the temptation “**Tell this stone to turn into a loaf.**” Matthew Kelly reminds us of the not-so-subtle lie our modern culture proposes: “The meaning of life is to get what you want; and the more you get of what you want, the happier you will be” (p 10, The Biggest Lie): For what do you hunger? Constant entertainment? Sexual pleasure? What will you do for that next drink? The temptation is real; we need food and drink, companionship to survive; but at times, do we distort the necessity of physical comforts and pleasures? Do we overindulge or use people for our own convenience? Jesus shows us this first line of defense to this very real temptation: control our appetites and urges; lest they control us. Discuss together instances when we should subordinate the physical desire for pleasure and comfort to a higher ideal...**Man lives not on bread alone.**

2. The second temptation tactic goes a little deeper into our ego and need to be self sufficient. We all desire to be self sufficient, to have power to do whatever we want whenever we want, free from natural limitations... This desire for a distorted view of self and dependence on God is symbolized by the temptation “**I shall give you all this power.**” How does this temptation play out today? By getting us to believe a distorted view of ourselves:

Most people think they are better drivers than they really are; most people think they are healthier than they actually are; and most of us think we are better Christians than we are (p 19). We are intensely attached to being perceived in a positive light, even by people we don’t know and will never meet—perhaps most telling, we even want to be perceived positively by people we don’t like....People have; always pretended to be more than who they really are. We have all done it. Driven by ego and a desire to maintain a certain image, we pretend to be more or different than who we actually are. The birth of social media has put this pretending on steroids. (P16-19 Biggest Lie)

Discuss when you have fallen into this trap of pretending to be more than you are. Jesus reminds us that only God is self sufficient. Our existence depends on him...we need him to sustain and guide us...**God alone you must serve.**

3. Finally, the third temptation focuses on our relationship with God. Do we seek to have God under our control. In moments of crisis and temptation, do we trust God or do we test him? We all desire recognition, popularity, and praise...a swan dive from the Temple parapet would have won Jesus instant fame...but these are no substitutes for the true meaning and happiness given by humble friendship with God; it’s not worth risking the latter to gain the former. (*The Better Part* p 556)...Share those moments when you have trusted in God rather than testing God? When an unexpected test result comes back? When you experienced a deep betrayal by a family member? When financial stability was no longer? When an unexpected and tragic death occurs. At these moments did you trust or test God? Jesus reminds us how to handle those critical moments of temptation: **You must not put the Lord your God to the test.**



**March 17, 2019**

## **SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT**

**GOSPEL [LUKE 9:28-36](#)**

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying.

While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.



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March 17, 2019

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### SECOND WEEK OF LENT: TRANSFIGURATION

#### Why do you think the Transfiguration occurred? Discuss.

Jesus, in his humanity, gives three select disciples a glimpse of his divinity. Rays shine forth that transfigured the man-Jesus into the divine God-man. “*While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.*” Why would Jesus be showing the three bewildered apostles that his humanity transfigured to the glory that he shared from the beginning of time? Could Jesus be showing the three bewildered apostles that holiness—symbolized by the light of Jesus shining through his garments—is possible for the three apostles? And for all of us?

Matthew Kelly writes emphatically that holiness is possible and to think otherwise, is to buy into the biggest lie in the history of Christianity. “The great majority of modern Christians don’t actually believe holiness is possible. Sure, we believe it is possible for grandmothers or some medieval saint—just not for us. We don’t believe holiness is possible for us. This is one of the great tragedies of every Christian era (Lie, p 33).

#### Search your heart. Do you believe holiness is possible for you? Discuss.

No one doubts that the Transfiguration was a holy moment. How about you? When has the light of Christ shined through you? When have you experienced a **Holy Moment**?

- **A Holy Moment** is a moment when you open yourself to God. You make yourself available to him. You set aside what you feel like doing in that moment, and you set aside self-interest, and for one moment you simply do what you prayerfully believe God is calling you to do in that moment. That is a Holy Moment.
- **A Holy Moment** is a moment when you are being the person God created you to be, and you are doing what you believe God is calling you to do in that moment. It is an instance where you set aside self-interest, personal desire, and what you feel like doing or would rather be doing, and embrace what you believe will bring the most good to the most people in that moment.
- Can you go out tomorrow, collaborate with God in this way, and create one Holy Moment? It is accessible, achievable, and immensely practical (Lie, p36).

Resolution: my Holy Moment \_\_\_\_\_



March 24, 2019

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

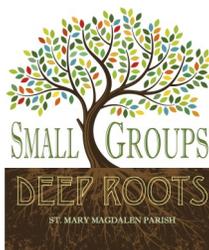
### GOSPEL LUKE 13:1-9

Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.

Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!"

And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?'

He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"



Lord, please, I beg you, never let me forget that holiness is possible, and give me the grace and courage to go out into the world and create with you as many Holy Moments as possible. Amen.

**March 24, 2019**

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT: Fig Tree**

Just like the fig tree was given another chance—one more year to produce fruit—we are given opportunities in our life to do something simple: create a holy moment.

God is always waiting for us, and checking back in with us, like the gardener, that we may bear fruit. We don't know how long we have. We don't know how long our "one year more" will be. Let us spend this Lent making a difference by creating Holy Moments throughout our day. The good news is that Holy Moments do not have to be huge and heroic. We have the power to create Holy Moments everyday in ordinary ways by opening ourselves up and invite God into our daily lives and actions.

Page 50-51 of Matthew Kelly's book *The Biggest Lie in the History of Christianity* cites many Holy Moment examples. Here are a few:

- Begin each day with a short prayer of gratitude thanking God for giving you another day of life. That's a Holy Moment.
- Offer the least enjoyable talk of your day to God as a prayer for someone who is suffering. That's a Holy Moment.
- Control your temper, even if you are fully justified in losing it.
- Be patient with that person who drives you crazy. That's a Holy Moment.
- Do someone's else's chores. That's a Holy Moment.
- Teach someone how to pray. That's a Holy Moment.
- Give whoever is in front of you your full attention. That's a Holy Moment.

**Your Holy Moment:** \_\_\_\_\_



**March 31, 2019**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**GOSPEL LUKE 15: 1-3, 11-32**

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So to them Jesus addressed this parable: "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.'

So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'"

So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.

He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.'

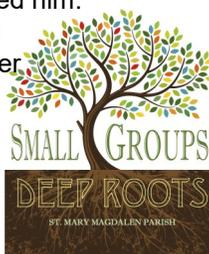
But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing.

He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'

He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"



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**March 31, 2019**

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT: Prodigal Son**

The powerful story of the Prodigal Son has many layers. One way to understand the story is seeing the Father as our heavenly Father. The house is our heavenly home, the "Father's house." The two sons can be described as those who have left the Father's house and returned; and those who faithfully stay in the Father's house. **Which of the three characters in the parable do you relate to at this time in your life?** At different stages of our life, we may have connected with a different character.

Matthew Kelly mentions, "...the people who show up to Church on Sunday and those that don't show up to church all have the same ten things on their mind (p.74-77):

1. **Relationships:** Most people want their primary relationships to improve; others may be asking, will I ever find someone.
2. **Family:** No family is like the Christmas card pictures. Every family has something going on that they wouldn't want to see on the front page of the newspaper tomorrow morning.
3. **Health:** Everyone knows somebody with serious health issues.
4. **Work:** They might be saying to themselves: my boss is a jerk, my colleagues are bullies, are they going to fire me? How do I bring more meaning to my work?
5. **Money:** How do discern if I should or shouldn't buy something? Savings? Take a job that pays more or pays less?
6. **Addiction:** We are all addicted to something: drugs, alcohol, food, other peoples' attention, pornography, shopping, vanity, the list is endless.
7. **God, spirituality and church:** Whether you go to church or not, people have these things on their minds to varying degrees. What is the meaning of life? What can I do to grow spiritually?
8. **Fear:** We fear the future, the past, worried about what we will do with all that time, afraid we will run out of money...terrorism...retirement home.... Did I waste my life?
9. **Hopes and dreams:** We have the astounding ability to look into the future and envision something bigger and better.
10. **The Question:** Every single person is grappling with a question right now. Each and every one of us is waiting on God for that deeply personal answer to our question.

### **What do you have on your mind?**

With the above list, what do you think the Father in this parable was thinking about? the Prodigal Son? the older son?

Amidst all those thoughts, we are called to create Holy Moments. The Father creates a Holy Moment by welcoming the prodigal son; the prodigal son created a Holy Moment in his humility. The older son has a choice: reject the brother and father's actions, or to create Holy Moments by joining the father and welcoming the brother. We are similarly challenged to create Holy Moments by the choices we make.

This week we are invited to create a special Holy Moment by repairing our relationship with God through the parish Penance Service.



**April 7, 2019**  
**FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**GOSPEL JOHN 8:1-11**

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them.

Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle.

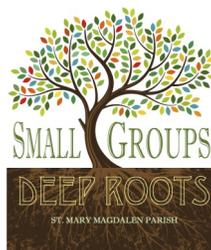
They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders.

So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."



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**April 7, 2019**

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT: Woman caught in Adultery**

Woman caught in adultery is a great story of someone who had a powerful encounter with Jesus; up front and personal. She didn't choose this, but Jesus did. He knew she would be there that day. Like in every encounter, Jesus made himself available for that Holy Moment.

#### **Have you had a personal encounter —a Holy Moment—with Jesus? Share.**

Jesus didn't just challenge her to be better, he gave her the grace of forgiveness to be transformed. She wasn't tweaked here and there, she was forgiven, "Neither do I condemn you." And given a command, "Go and from now on do not sin any more."

She wasn't tweaked. In that encounter, she was transformed. What's the difference? The desire for tweaking is selective and selfish, while transformation is total and selfless. Matthew Kelly continues:

Avoiding transformation has a very real impact on our spirituality. Once we abandon the transformation that is the Christian life, our focus falls on tweaking; our spirituality becomes mediocre and very self-centered. Then we start praying for tweaking: Dear God, please tweak this...and please tweak that...and tweak my spouse...and tweak my spouse again because it didn't take the first time...and tweak my kids...and tweak my boss...and tweak my colleagues at work...and tweak my son's soccer coach...and tweak my daughter's school teacher...and tweak our pastor...and tweak the politicians.... We pray for tweaking. I suspect 90 percent of prayers in this country today are tweaking prayers. This desire for tweaking is selective and selfish, while transformation is total and selfless. We pray for tweaking, and then we have the audacity to wonder why or even complain that God doesn't answer our prayers. Why doesn't he answer our prayer? The reason is very simple and clear: God is not in the business of tweaking. God is in the business of transformation. (p. 99)

A big first step to be transformed is to make yourself available. The woman caught in adultery was before Jesus. Not by her wishes, but there, in the right place, at the right time, nonetheless. And when she is present, God began the transformation. Availability is what God looks for in the resume of our hearts (Kelly, 101). **How available are you to God at this time in your life? What is holding you back from making yourself 100 percent available to God?**

**As we end the Creating Holy Moments series and into God's most Holy Moment —Holy Week— pray the Message Series prayer together for your transformation, not for tweaking.**