

“Giving Up”

Luke 4:1-13

Lent, 40 days before Easter with six Sundays, started with Ash Wednesday this past week. There are some words that automatically come to our minds when we hear the word, Lent. I asked those present at the Ash Wednesday services what those words are. The following are the words we listed: 40 days, repentance, prayer, listen, reflection, meditation, fasting, sacrifice, self-denial, self-examination.

Last week, we talked about the word, “Listen” as we heard the words from heaven when Jesus was transfigured on a mountain, “This is my Son. **Listen** to Him.” We emphasize “listening” during Lent – listening to God, listening to our body, listening to the message behind words, listening to the desires of our hearts, listening to the sounds around us and reflecting on what they are saying to us....and most of all, listening to the voice of God’s grace.

At the Ash Wednesday service, we focused in on the following words. “Return, Gather and Pray.” Return –making a U turn and going in a new direction. Gather – as a community of faith. Pray – for one another. We are never alone in this Lenten journey.

This morning, let us look at the words, “giving up.” In today’s Gospel lesson, we learn that Jesus gave up at least **three** things when he was tempted by the devil.

In the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus was led to the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. He was there for 40 days, “being tempted by the devil,” according to the Gospel of Luke. He had not eaten anything during those days and the fast from food left him exhausted and starving.

The devil tempted Jesus and said, “Since you are God’s Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” We know that Jesus could change a stone to a loaf of bread. So did the devil. What a dire temptation it is for someone, who was starving and malnourished!

Jesus responded to the Devil, however, using the words from Deuteronomy, a book in the Old Testament, which talked about how **God** fed the Israelites in the wilderness with manna, bread from heaven. “It’s written, People won’t live only by bread.” In Deuteronomy, it continues, “rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” (Dt. 8:3)

What did Jesus give up here? (Temptation to change a stone to bread. A loaf of bread. The temptation to yield to hunger. To listen to the devil. Distrust in God. Materialistic fullness. Temptation to do his own will.)

Then the devil took Jesus to a high place, showed him in a single instant the kingdoms of the world. The devil said to Jesus, "I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms if you worship me. It will all be yours."

Jesus replied, using the words from Deuteronomy again. "It's written; You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him." (Dt. 6:13)

What did Jesus give up here? He gave up: worldly power; authority over the kingdoms of the world; his desire to rule the world in his own way.

Finally the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the temple. The devil said to Jesus, "Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down from here; for it's written in the book of Psalm that God will command his angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone."

Jesus replied, "It's been said, don't test the Lord your God," using the words from Deuteronomy again. The background of those words was the event in which the Israelites complained to Moses for the lack of food and water as they wandered in the wilderness and tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

So, what did Jesus give up when he didn't yield to the devil's last temptation, throwing himself from the top of the temple so that God's angels would scoop him up? (Testing God. Doubting God.)

Jesus gave up three things when the devil tempted him in the wilderness: a loaf of bread (physical nourishment that comes from the devil), worldly power and testing God. On a deeper level, he **gave up** yielding to the lures of the devil and **chose** to worship and trust God only.

What is God inviting us to give up this Lent?

In his Lenten message, Pope Francis said to the world: "**Indifference** to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience."

Instead of giving up our favorite foods and activities for Lent, like chocolate, the pope seems to want us to give up our indifference to others. He continued: “We end up being incapable of feeling **compassion** at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own.”

For the last few months, I have suffered from Adhesive Capsulitis, which is a fancy name for “frozen shoulder.” Bursitis in my shoulder led me not to use my left arm, which led me to have a frozen shoulder on my left arm. When I saw my doctor in the middle of December, I could raise my left arm only to about 80 degrees. Although I have had tendonitis in my right forearm and experienced pain in my left arm before, the pain I had from this frozen shoulder was more extreme than what I had experienced before. My husband thought I was having a bad dream when he heard me groan during my sleep. For the last two months, I have taken medication for inflammation, had a cortisone shot in my left shoulder, and have gone to physical therapy three times a week and have kept doing the exercises my physical therapist taught me to do at home on the days when I do not go to physical therapy.

Thanks to the Healing Power through all those methods, the use of essential oils and others’ and my own prayers for healing, now I can raise my left arm this high, not as complete as my right arm, but much improved.

As I have felt pain in my shoulder, I have thought of all the people who have told me in the past that they had chronic pain. How awful it would be to have constant pain all the time, day and night, every minute and every second, not only for months but for years! I thought of people who had pain in their shoulders, foot, back, legs and all over the body...and prayed for their healing as well as mine. I could no longer be “indifferent” to their pain.

My physical pain affected me emotionally, psychologically and even spiritually. I became more pessimistic about life, which is not like me most of the times. Many people, who are older than I, have in the past said to me, “Don’t get old.” I suddenly felt like saying to others, “Don’t get old.”

I prayed for those who have experienced emotional and psychological pain and those who were spiritually affected by them. The emotional, psychological and spiritual injuries are as bad as or even worse than physical pain sometimes.

We are not to be burdened by other people's pain but we can pray for others and lift them up to God, who gives us healing when we are open to receive it. And we know that prayer often nudges us to actions.

What is God inviting us to give up this Lent?

What type of indifference is God inviting us to give up?

May God bless and transform us as we walk this Lenten journey with the Lord. Amen.