

Points to Help Homily Preparation from a JPIC Perspective

Readings of the First Sunday of Lent – Sunday, March 1, 2009

Gn 9:8-15

1 Pt 3:18-22

Mk 1:12-15

Motives for engaging actively in the Season of Lent are many. Let us mention here those that are most obvious:

First, we imitate the example of Jesus who fasted and prayed in the desert for forty days as he considered John the Baptist's proclamation of his vocation as Savior of his nation and all nations. This traditional motivation for our forty-day time of penitence is laid out in today's Gospel.

Secondly, we engage with Lent to "get in shape" spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically. This period is a holistic time during which we take notice of what we eat, and attend to our body's need for exercise and proper rest. Caring for ourselves physically leads to emotional serenity and to an openness to intellectual and spiritual deepening. Lent, in a word, is an extended time of retreat, given to us by the Church.

In the third place, this time of repentance gives us U.S. Americans the opportunity to beg God's forgiveness for the sins of our society and culture. We are not unlike the Ninevites of Jonah's time who heard the prophet's warning and, by doing penance in sackcloth and ashes, averted the disaster which their infidelity had brought near.

Finally, we spend these six weeks anticipating the celebration, once again, of the new and eternal covenant, prefigured in the First Reading from Genesis and accomplished, as St. Peter tells us, through the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

*Fr. Joe Nangle, OFM
Member of Holy Name's JPIC Directorate*