

1 Lent
February 21, 2010
Fr. McGinty

“Walk with Me, Oh My Lord”

All around the diocese this year and particularly this Lent people are talking about Evangelism and the diocesan program: “Unbinding the Gospel.”

In a recent radio interview our presiding Bishop Katherine was quoted as saying: “If you want to see Evangelism at work go to the diocese of Bethlehem.”

Evangelism is the ministry of spreading or proclaiming the Gospel by word or deed. It has had a bad rap for years, because it has been associated with people coming to your door and telling you that with 6 billion other people you can't be saved because you have the wrong bible.

Evangelism, real evangelism begins with ourselves. It begins with ourselves when we ask: “What do I believe, is it a part of my identity and do others see Christ in me? If they do then I'm an Evangelist. If they don't then I'm just a contradiction.”

Lent arrives each year to redress the balance in our lives between what we say we believe and how in reality we demonstrate that belief.

Let me give you an example: We believe that God is our Father; that he cares for us and loves us and that he is revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ. Our relationship with the Father can only be broken by sin. But generally, as long as we see ourselves involved with building Christ's Kingdom on earth we somehow feel connected to the Father.

Yet, you and I know that any relationship is only as good as communications can make it. If we don't take the time to communicate then the relationship deteriorates or dies.

In the Gospel story today it is Jesus' relationship with the Father which is under attack. The devils three temptations are geared towards undermining: The nature of Jesus' mission, his being the “Son of God”, and that he has been commissioned by the Father to inaugurate a new kind of Kingdom.

The devil seeks to plant the seeds of doubt that will bring Jesus' obedience and love of the Father crashing down and bring the vehicle of man's salvation-Christ's Kingdom to a halt.

The doubt that invades our lives has much more to do with the fact that we can isolate ourselves from the love of God our Father in our own kind of wilderness or desert. We allow God to be squeezed out of our lives by the pressure we place on ourselves to respond to every demand of time, work, worry, stress and responsibility place on us. We think that we can do it all and for a time we can, until it all begins to come apart and crashes around our ears.

How we run our lives is often analogous of a marriage, when its good, its very good, when it goes bad, it goes very bad. Only then do we really feel the need for God and God's help.

You and I play an enormous part in the Gospel story of Jesus' temptations in the desert. I say that even though we weren't there. You see through our Baptism we were drawn into this relationship between Jesus and his father. Jesus acts in obedience to the father. We work so that Jesus' mission and dream of the Kingdom will be realized. Our temptation is that we too easily allow other things to distract us from that mission.

We need to constantly remind ourselves that the blueprint for Christ kingdom based on love, forgiveness, compassion and mercy is the gospel. We can too easily re-write that gospel and turn it into the "I'm building my own Kingdom" rather than I'm building Christ's Kingdom.

In the Gospel Jesus places his trust in God as Father. That is the great test of our faith also. Too often we fail to proclaim the gospel with the testimony of our own lives, because we do not trust others will see will not be the same, cool, sophisticated, plausible or cut the mustard.

Good evangelism allows people to see that your faith makes a big contribution to your life without you ever having to preach to them.

In this season of Lent we need to work at keeping the lines of communication open with God. That means: reading a passage per week from scripture and spending a little more time in prayer.

St John Bosco, the Patron saint of youth wrote extensively for ordinary people with working lives and said: "Don't think for a moment that I don't realize and understand how difficult your lives can be. You come to the end of a working week and realize there was no moment in that week when you stopped to pray, visit church or read scripture. It can leave you with a terrible void in your life, where you realize 'God should be.' In stress, temptation, anger, you forget to turn to the one source of power and grace that can truly help and sustain you.

I want today to tell you, that God is still there. He does not go away. He can't go away. You are part of him as he is part of you. He has made promises to you in the Covenant of Baptism, just as you made promises to him. Except God always keeps his promises. His love does not dim or diminish because of our inability to manage our lives.

What we can do each and every week is to make the mental intention to 'walk with God' throughout our week.

Jesus goes into desert to seek communication with his father. We are asked in lent to use the time of this season to deepen our relationship with God. In the first reading we are told that the Israelites in affliction cried out to God. Lent gives us the opportunity to cry out to God also, but unlike the Israelites, we have a bargaining chip. We have the saving action of Jesus and his cross that has won for us a free flow of God's grace.

Paul tells us the "word is near on your lips and in your heart." When we become aware that God walks with us through our day and through our week, we have already begun to unbind the Gospel in our lives and make it an open book for all to see.

Let us pray.

"Walk with me-oh my God, through the darkest night and brightest day, be at my side, oh Lord.

Hold my hand and guide me on my way.

This we ask through Christ our Lord."

Amen+