

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR OF MATTHEW

1. Reminded of Vision Quest of native Americans and many tribal cultures
 - a. Clear distinction between ordinary members of tribe and those called to leadership in providing for the tribe such as warriors and hunters
 - b. To discover person's future role he or she would go into the wilderness alone to fast and pray
 - i. to get a vision of what they were to do
2. today's Gospel comes after the baptism of Jesus
 - a. In Baptism Jesus is confirmed in His belief that he was not just an ordinary human being,
 - i. special relationship with God, the Spirit appears as dove and the Father speaks out: This is my beloved Son
 - b. Jesus is led out into the desert to be tested, to discern what it means to be Son of God and Messiah
 - i. Jesus has to discern what does it mean that He is the Son of God
3. Central theme to the temptations, devil introduces them saying If you are the Son of God
 - a. First temptation Jesus is hungry after fasting for forty days
 - i. Devil tries to raise doubt, are you really Son of God and play on His pride
 1. If you are show it by turning stones into bread
 - ii. Jesus rejects that temptation, not by bread alone does man live
 1. His power, His identity is not about personal gain and comfort
 2. He is on a mission to save the world not for Himself but for the Father
 - b. If Son, throw self down from temple prove that you deserve to be called Son of God by having angels protect you
 - i. Jesus response is you are not to test God
 - ii. He is going on the test to discern God's will, not force God into accepting His own plan
 1. It would have been sin of pride to assume God owed him protection of angels
 - c. On the Mountain the devil insinuates that he as devil can give all the power of world
 - i. evil in the world offers doubt to Jesus: can you really make a difference
 - ii. Worshipping devil would be forming an army to overthrow the Romans
 - iii. This was a popular image of the Messiah to be a powerful warrior and king
 - iv. Jesus rejects that idea of a shortcut, He presents God as hope for the world
 1. Hope comes in service not in worldly power
4. Devil is trying to raise doubt in Jesus mind
 - a. You are just fooling yourself, to believe what you heard in baptism
 - b. You are really a nobody, use your powers to prove to yourself your importance
 - i. Prove importance by comfort, or pride or power
 - c. Jesus successfully resists these temptations' with a confidence in Himself
 - d. He accepts the words at Baptism, no matter how improbable, it might seem though human, He is Son of God

- i. He does not need to prove this to anyone, even Himself
5. Story of Adam and Eve is about our own quest
 - a. WE like Adam and Eve have been created in the image of God
 - b. Each of us mirrors some unique aspect of God
 - c. Not only are we created in the image of God, in the sacraments like baptism and confirmation, we are made children of God, filled with God's spirit
6. Challenge for us like Adam and Eve, like Jesus, God allows us to be tested
 - a. He wants us to choose to love Him freely
 - i. Freedom is an essential aspect of God and so we are free as well
 - ii. So we have to make our own choice to love God or not
 - b. In book of Job, Satan is described as being like a prosecutor
 - c. His job is to test us, are we really faithful lovers of God, do we believe that we are children of God
7. He raises doubt in our minds, like he did to Adam and Eve, God is holding you back
 - a. If you just taste evil in some way, then you would become gods
 - i. Evil looks attractive, pride that I am more important than anyone else, or
 - ii. power to force others to do things m y way,
 - iii. Greed – possessions are more important than God's people
 - iv. Lust – attraction to pornography more important than dignity of others as God's child
 - b. When we fail the test, we can accept our guilt and ask forgiveness
 - c. Devil tempts us to shame, like Adam and Eve we try to hide our evil or blame someone
 - d. With shame we feel like failures allowing devil to tempt us: to try again and prove our importance
8. Jesus is one human who breaks this cycle – he puts God first in everything even when life at risk
 - a. He empties himself of the presumed rights of being God
 - b. His obedience and commitment to God serves as an act of righteousness
 - c. In Jesus God offers us the possibility of refreshing our innocence
 - d. The accumulative effect of sin through the ages affects from birth
 - e. tempted by the devil and world and our own human weakness, we fail to love God
 - f. As humans we are born into the influence of evil as result of sins of one another
9. Jesus offers us the opportunity to join ourselves to Him
 - a. He is telling us we are children of God
 - b. Each of us is important and holy, not by our own efforts but because God has created us
 - c. We deny ourselves to celebrate that God truly is in charge, we are free from devil, Satan, flesh
 - i. We can abstain from food for a time, we can share our gifts with those in need, we can spend time with God rather than trying to always distract ourselves
10. Ultimately this is the test each of us continues to face
 - a. do we stay in the trap of self-doubt, trying to prove our worth to ourselves
 - b. Or do we believe in our goodness and holiness and have the freedom to put God first