

Resources for Discussion and Reflection



Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission

Northeastern Ohio Lutheran Synod of the ELCA
and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown
Lent 2010

WEEK ONE

Dt 26:4-10 Romans 10:8-13 Lk 4:1-13

Lent may hold many meanings for each of us. Some meanings may call us to reflect on our lives and our spiritual journeys. It is, on the one hand, demanding, calling us to give up something so that we may encounter God and know God's plan and purpose for our life. On the other hand, we may be guided to take on something that will help us to experience a higher calling and grow deeper spiritually. There are many temptations on our world that pull us away from "giving up" and "taking on" that which would help us live obedient, faithful lives...

1. How does temptation enter your life? What would be helpful for you to "give up" or "take on"? Why?

The first reading and Gospel reading reveal God who provides for all of our needs. Especially through our baptism we are gifted for all that God would have us do. Jesus was baptized and then led immediately into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2. How does your response to your baptism strengthen you in your wilderness, and give you all you need to confess Jesus as Lord of your life? Is it possible for you to do what Jesus did whenever you are tempted?
3. The Devil will keep looking for opportune times in our lives to tempt us and draw us away from serving God. How can your Lenten journey help strengthen your faith and help you to live out your faith in loving, active ways?

WEEK TWO

Gen 15:5-12 Phil 3:17-4:1 Lk 9:28-36

It is easy to follow Jesus when you have a mountain top experience with him, see who Jesus really is and receive what he has to offer. The disciples wanted to construct three tents so they could cherish the past and stay there, safe and secure. Jesus however was calling them to come down the mountain and walk with him toward the cross. We can hear this same call to us to find and reflect the brightness of Jesus in our daily, routine lives...

1. How do you encounter Jesus with those at your job, home and school, when you have a disagreement with someone? How can the lifestyle you lead reflect your journey with Christ to the cross and be a Christian model worth following?
2. Share as a group the things that your congregation is offering during Lent to learn more about Jesus' way to the cross. How do these opportunities bring you closer to God? (Examples: scripture studies, Stations of the Cross, soup suppers, evening prayer) Can you make a commitment to share in one or two of these offerings?

WEEK THREE

Ex 3:1-8,13-15 1 Cor 10:1-6,10-12 Lk 13:1-9

Our gospel today gives us the Parable of the Fig Tree to reflect upon. Jesus sees a fig tree that has been growing for the usual three years. It is now expected to bear fruit. It will be graciously tended for another year. If it then bears no fruit, it will be cut down. God wants us to live a full, active life with him. He wants us to participate in his kingdom rather than being a passive bystander. It is not healthy for us to slide by spiritually on minimalism. A branch can be physically dead and still be attached to a tree. God wants abundant life for all.

1. When in your life have you experienced a merciful second chance which you may not have deserved?
2. What in your congregation perhaps needs cut down (not working), more manure (needing nurturing), or regrafted (needing reconciliation)? Now ask the same question with yourself as the fig tree.

WEEK FOUR

Joshua 5:9,10-12 2 Cor 5:17-21 Lk 15:1-32

Jesus tells three parables in today's gospel. We see a person with 100 sheep who loses one and a woman with ten coins who loses one. In both cases their response is to search diligently for the lost even if it means temporarily leaving the saved. These two stories show an absolute concern for the lost. In the third parable we meet a father who has two sons. The one son leaves his family and his home and becomes as "lost" as a Jewish person can become – he is feeding pigs and longs to eat what they are eating. He "comes to his senses" and decides to go home where he is welcomed and restored as a son.

1. In each of these stories what stands out as a result of the seeking?
2. Have you ever had to search, in some way, like this father and forgive with this much compassion?
3. How is God's forgiveness different from how we forgive ourselves and others?

Jesus acts out these parables of forgiveness when he is nailed hands and feet to a cross. Even then he seeks out the lost and asks the Father to "forgive them for they don't know what they do". Jesus has shown us his Father who will welcome us home in the most costly way through the death of his beloved Son. For Jesus all the parables lead to the cross where justice will be measured out with compassion and love. It is right to call it "Good Friday".