Lent 1 B

# MDP of God

I ask you to take a look at the crucifix – **really look at it**

# Try to imagine what it was like that day

To see Jesus scourged [The whip that would have been used – would have had three strands to it – each with a little mettle ball with little spikes on it – it was designed to take flesh with every hit of the whip- He received 39 lashes]

Try to imagine soldiers putting a crown of thorns on Jesus – kneeling before Him mockingly saying, “All hail the king of the Jews – ha ha ha”

Try to imagine His mother seeing her Son mocked, beaten, laughed at- scourged- nailed to the cross- and dying on the cross

*That’s the price of our sins* – my sins and your sins

My friends during lent we are called to look at Jesus not just with our physical eyes- but more importantly- with the eyes of our hearts

And that’s so important, because when we look at life through our natural eyes only – we can forget the spiritual battle we’re all in

We can forget the incredible price that was paid for our sins

We can forget how much we are loved by Jesus *and how much we are to love Him in return*

A lot of times we don’t want to look at our lives through the eyes of our hearts **because** *we might not like what we see*

When I look through the eyes of my heart at the love Jesus has for me, I can’t help but seeing how my love for Him seems so inadequate in comparison to His

When I look through the eyes of my heart at all Jesus did for me, I can’t help *this nagging fear* that perhaps **I love my sins** *more than I love Jesus*

When I look through the eyes of my heart, I can’t help notice that I have time to look at the paper- to watch the TV or a video – to do other things I enjoy/// --- but that *time seems to run short* when it comes to prayer – when it comes to going to the adoration chapel- when it comes to spiritual reading

My friends, lent is a time to open the eyes of our hearts so that we see clearly our relationship with God – and set about making it stronger

If our relationship with Him is to become stronger we need first and foremost to **repent of our sins**

It’s one of the first things Jesus preaches in the His public ministry – “This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel”

Hold that thought just for second – I want to change gears and then come back to that

In today’s gospel we heard that Jesus before He began His public ministry – fasted for 40 days in the dessert

That He was tempted by Satan – but of course He triumphed over those temptations

And it was then that He began His public ministry

I think it’s important to realize that our fasting and good works of lent can bear real spiritual fruit in our lives

Fasting does several things for us on a spiritual level

First of all – it helps us to create room in our lives for God

You see when we’re hungry **through self-denial**– we can allow that hunger to lead us to recognize a deeper hunger in our hearts *– the hunger for God which is the deepest longing in all of our lives* [whether we recognize that or not]- so we create room in our lives for God through our fasting

Secondly, fasting allows us to gain control of our passions

We as Catholics believe that through original sin that our passions are disordered

Our passion for food – alcohol- sex- power-material possessions – for the pleasures of life

Those passions can, *if we let them*- **control us**- *they can make us their slaves*

Fasting [whether it be from food or drink or TV or favorite past times- whatever we’re fasting from] -allows us to control our passions

It allows us to be controlled by the spirit rather than our bodies- it helps us to bring our bodies under the control of the Spirit

**And again**, *fasting can be from more than food*- many saints have spoken of fasting from all kinds of things: St. John Chrysostom once said: [Pretty long quote]

“Let the hands fast, by being free from avarice.

Let the feet fast, but ceasing from running to the unlawful spectacles.

Let the eyes fast, being taught never to fix themselves rudely upon handsome countenances, or to busy themselves with strange beauties.[Modern translation of that: Don’t check out people with a hot body]

For looking is the food of the eyes, but if this be such as is unlawful or forbidden, it mars the fast; *and upsets the whole safety of the soul*

For it would be among things the most absurd to abstain from lawful food because of the fast, but with the eyes to touch even what is forbidden. Dost thou not eat flesh? Feed not upon lasciviousness by means of the eyes.

Let the ear fast also. The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to receive evil speakings and calumnies. "Thou shalt not receive a false report," it says.”

So St John Chysostom is speaking about – controlling the passions

What our eyes look at

What our ears listen to

What our hands desire

What our tongues speak

*The third thing fasting does for us* – is it helps to clear our minds – helps us to focus on God

That’s why Jesus, before He began His public ministry, fasted

To focus Himself on God – to be freed from the distractions of every day life

That’s how Jesus prepared Himself to preach the gospel

My friends, this time of fasting and penance can be an opportunity to more clearly see – what we need to repent of

We Americans often have a distorted view of the spiritual life

We have a tendency to think that if we’re not purposely hurting others – that we’re doing just fine with God

I run in to Catholics often who don’t take God’s commandments seriously– who aren’t coming to Church – or who are living with someone outside of marriage – or wouldn’t know a bible if it hit them in the head- or haven’t raised their children in the faith-who think there’s nothing wrong with racial prejudice or destroying the unborn- who constantly take God’s name in vain without giving it a second thought

And when I challenge them about what ever it is- the response I often get is: “Well I’m a good person….. I haven’t hurt anybody….I pray”

There’s often **an indifference to the Will of God**, and there seems to be no clue that that’s a problem

# Again, I ask you to look at the crucifix

That’s the price of our sins – **so we should hate sin with every fiber of our being**

Jesus suffered that out of love for us – **we should love Him with all our hearts**

After all – if we’re thinking rightly how could we ever love anyone or anything more than the one {Point to crucifix} who did that for us?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus will never be satisfied with our just being good people – He won’t be satisfied unless we love Him with all our hearts

Jesus will never be satisfied with our being content to keep on sinning on the one hand and paying Him lip service on the other hand

He’ll never be satisfied with being the second or third or the tenth priority of our lives

He’ll certainly never be satisfied with our loving our sins more than we love Him!

My friends – let this lent be a time to open the eyes of your hearts to see what you’ve put in front of Jesus- *so you can repent of that*

Through our fasting and prayer, let’s open the eyes of our hearts to see the things we need to really repent of so that we can grow closer to the one {Point to crucifix}who loves us so incredibly

God bless you and have a wonderful lent