# Lent 1 C

MDP of God

Perhaps many of you have heard the saying "If you lie down with dogs, you will rise with fleas."

 That saying holds much truth, and so does this story.

A Story about a pilot and a rat [Many of you know I’m a pilot and have a love of aviation- so this story really struck me]

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The modern jet on the runway was a beauty. It was equipped with the latest technology and weaponry. The jet could fly at supersonic speeds, and quickly race to great heights.

If an enemy plane were in the vicinity, the jet's pilot could destroy that plane miles away, before the other plane's pilot could even see him.

An Air Force pilot climbed into the jet and off he flew, leaving the earth far behind as he soared above the clouds.

Although no one was looking, the pilot straightened himself in his seat. He was naturally proud of his jet, and of himself for qualifying to fly such a sophisticated piece of equipment.

After he reached cruising altitude, *the pilot heard a strange noise*. He took off his helmet, and recognized the noise -- it sounded like something gnawing on rubber or plastic.

Peering down below the instrument panel, to his horror the pilot saw a rat, *out of his reach* and gnawing on the main electrical wire between the jet's controls and its engine.

 He knew if the rat were to cut through that line, the jet would careen out of control, and crash immediately. The pilot's first instinct was to descend -- an emergency landing. But he had flown so far, he knew he was far over the ocean and there was not enough time to get back over land.

*So he decided to ascend* -- maybe the rat couldn't survive at a higher altitude. The pilot put on his oxygen mask, boosted power to the jet's engine, and quickly climbed as high as he could go. Soon the gnawing sound ended. When the pilot landed safely, he found the rat -- dead.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO OUR LIVES? The pilot was highly trained, at the top of his profession. His equipment was the best that technology could provide. But his safety was threatened by the appetite of one of the most primitive of animals -- a rat.

Like that jet pilot, we live in a world of high technology. Robots make our clothes and our cars, microwave ovens cook our food, cell phones carry our voices, and computers *can put us in touch with people and information from all over the world.*

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*And yet our lives are also affected by many things people faced centuries ago.* ---Hatred, jealousy, lust and dishonesty continue to exist.----All we have to do is look at what’s going on in the Ukraine to see that violence and the desire to dominate and control others continues in our day

We are still plagued by temptations to strike out in anger, cut corners to get ahead, to use others--and toy with the truth.

We can gossip and tear others down because it makes us feel superior to them

We can nurture resentments in our hearts and refuse to forgive- *even refuse to forgive people we’ve made a vow to love*

*Why? Because we have a fallen human nature—and the big rat—satan---continues to gnaw at our hearts and souls*

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And something else hasn’t changed: *most people say they want to be delivered from temptations,* **but really** *many of us would like to keep in touch with them.* [I’ve got to confess---I hate sin in other people—but I’m pretty fond of my own sins]

You see, we know certain things are wrong, *yet we still flirt with them*. Then as our power of resistance weakens, we think that one small compromise of our principles won't matter.

**But it does.** [lay down with dogs—you’ll wake up with flees]

Jesus in today’s gospel allowed Himself to be tempted by the Devil – yet He resisted those temptations and remained faithful to the Father

*You know* if Satan tempted Jesus – he and his cronies are certainly going to tempt us---the devil is like the rat in that story---*he keeps gnawing away at us until he can break through and destroy our relationship with God*

Jesus of course calls us, with God’s grace to resist temptation—How do we do that?

Take care to avoid being lured into moral and ethical trouble.

*Build a wall of protection around your life* by shunning anything that promotes or gives credibility to unwholesome attitudes.

If you’re watching a lot of TV---if you listen to a lot of popular songs---you’re probably poisoning your soul---you setting yourself up to feel that sin is no big deal---*and of course it is a big deal*

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So read Scripture, meditate upon its truths, and do your best to live by God’s Word.

Read the catechism of the Church – learn your faith better---scripture can sometimes be confusing – the catechism has things laid out pretty straightforward for us so that we can know what God wants – so that we can live by His wisdom

Pray – the rosary is a good start- you can also pray the breviary that priests and nuns and deacons pray every day – you can get a free app on your phone where every day you can bring up the breviary – the readings for Mass – and other prayers

If you haven’t signed up for the Heart of Jesus one day retreat next week---**sign up for it** – it can help you build your faith---and it can bring in contact with others who are seeking to walk the way of faith

Over the years we’ve have many people form good holy friendships with people they’ve prayed with on our renewals and prayer days---and it helps them to grow closer to Jesus

 *Good holy friendships can help keep us on the right path*

I know a lot of you are hit at school or work and maybe by some people in your extended family- *you’re hit with attacks on faith*—and we are so blessed here at St Helens to have a wonderful bible studies—prayer days—retreats that can strengthen your faith

We of course have our chapel that’s available to you 24hours a day 7 days a week [keys are available…..]

We have Mass every day – where you can hear God’s Word proclaimed and receive Jesus

During Lent we have the Stations of the Cross available on Friday evening-

I have to tell you –growing up the Stations of the Cross really touched my heart- they really got me thinking about all Jesus has done for us

I hope many of you will be able to come

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My friends, these simple steps can lead you to new spiritual altitudes. Just as the hungry rat couldn’t survive at high altitudes, sinful appetites can’t survive at great spiritual heights.

*But if we’re going to reach spiritual heights* – we have to do some climbing – **and climbing can be hard work**

I invite you during this season of Lent to strive for great spiritual heights

Jesus fasted and prayed- please fast and pray—after Stations of the Cross next Friday I’ll be doing a presentation on the importance of fasting

Jesus went out into the dessert – a place that is by nature pretty uncomfortable- in order prepare for His mission

*Don’t be afraid to push your comfort zone*- maybe you feel you wouldn’t be comfortable coming to bible study---or coming to the one day retreat next Saturday--**push your comfort zone**

*Maybe you feel it’s a hassle to come to the Stations or to come to the chapel to pray* – **push yourself** – make the effort to go the extra mile for your faith—*ask God for the grace to desire spiritual growth*

In our psalm today God said to us, – “Because he clings to me -[the Me is God], **I will deliver him”**

My friends- this Lent – cling to God- With God’s grace and the discipline of lent--we can (figuratively speaking) overcome the temptations to lie down with dogs so that we won’t wake with fleas

Cling to God --allow yourself with His grace to reach new spiritual heights- Heights where the sins and temptations that try to ensnare us—won’t be able to survive

May God bless you now and throughout this holy season of lent