

03/09/14 1 Lent A

-- St. Augustine said that our hearts are restless until they rest in the Lord. He knew that through his own life experience. He had tried to fill that hole in his heart with many things.

--He'd taken a mistress and had a child by her. He had sought wisdom in a few of the philosophical movements of his time. He became a great debater and became well known for his rhetoric. But none of that worked. There was still that hole in his heart.

-- From the beginning of time, men and women have tried to fill the hole in their hearts with things other than God. The story of Adam and Eve is evidence of that. The first man and woman had all they needed to live well. But they knew they were still creatures, under God's rule.

-- The devil sought to make them think they could be their own masters: *Why pay attention to God's law; you can have what you want and more.* Once they bit his fruit, so to speak, they did have more knowledge. But it did not make them happy. It put a gap between them and God.

-- St. Augustine took 30 years to discover that worldly things, whether physical or intellectual, could not satisfy that longing in his heart. Only fidelity to God would do that.

-- When we read about Jesus' temptations, we need to try to put ourselves in his shoes. He knew he was blessed by his Father in heaven. But that wasn't evident to all around him. And he didn't get much comfort from being blessed, at least in an earthly sense.

-- The devil played on that fact. *If you're the Son of God, you deserve some special treatment. You're doing so much good for the world. What's wrong with helping yourself in the process?*

-- Jesus resisted that temptation. When the devil offered him the VIP elevator, he said *Thanks, but I'll take the stairs down.* He wasn't going to compromise his mission for his own comfort.

-- That reminds me of Pope Francis' choice of a Ford Focus over a Mercedes Benz limousine for transportation. He doesn't let a Man of the Year award or any other accolade get to him. He's not afraid to admit to his weaknesses.

-- We may not be in a literal desert, especially this winter (more like the Arctic wilderness). But most, if not all, of us experience other deserts: loneliness, misunderstanding, illness, etc.

-- Lent is a season when we are challenged to rely upon God and not other crutches. Our Lenten practices, especially prayer, fasting and almsgiving, should lead us to a greater trust in God. They should also give us a greater sensitivity to the needs of those who have much less than we do.

-- May we set aside time to allow God to enter our hearts. Each day, we ought to give God a few minutes of the best time of our day to be attentive to him.

-- Perhaps our fasting need not necessarily be from certain foods or drink, though some of us might find that spiritually beneficial. We could fast from things like constant texting, or web pages we could just as well do without, or even gossipy conversations.

-- We would do well to use this Lent to raise our awareness of the needs around us... and the need for justice. Perhaps you may want to participate in our Thursday Lenten series starting this week (see the bulletin flier).

-- Our hearts cannot be satisfied by anything in this world. Only God himself can fill the hole in our hearts.