

THE ATTRACTION OF LOVE

By

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Down through the centuries in almost every human endeavour there are times when the participants take time to evaluate and to renew their original vision or experience. Certainly it is a challenging time yet nevertheless it is an energizing time of joy. The Lenten season is such a time in our Christian tradition. First of all I wonder what your feelings are about the Lenten season. Do you experience this as merely a time of “heavy duty penitence?” Perhaps you trivialize it somewhat and just see it as a time to “give up something”. Rather wherever you are in your faith journey this is a good time to look again at your participation in the Lenten season.

Let me say first of all that Lent should be entered in a spirit of joyful expectation. It should be a time when we can set time aside to intensify our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Although described as a penitential time it should never be approached as a grim and tortuous time. Our pattern should be modelled on the rich Scriptures that we are presented with during our Lenten liturgies. For instance the gospel for the first Sunday of Lent recounts how the Holy Spirit “drove Jesus out into the wilderness” notice that it was at the prompting of the Holy Spirit that Jesus goes out to the lonely place of encounter. In the same way the Spirit draws us to a place and time where we too can encounter the living God. It is the attraction of love or as Hosea the prophet put it in a recent reading at Sunday Mass “I am going to lure her and lead her out into the wilderness and speak to her heart” (Hosea 2:16) Isn’t that a lovely thought with which to approach Lent? God desires to “lure” us into the place where a divine/human encounter takes place in our innermost being. It is to be a time of inner transformation by love of our consciousness and our whole approach to life.

We need to remember that the Holy Spirit draws us to a truth not to discourage or condemn us (those feelings stem from our own ego-self) but to encourage us and build us up. Now that doesn’t necessarily mean that it will be easy but it will be an invigorating and enriching path. Recently we have seen many of the participants in the Winter Olympics being interviewed. They all point out the hard work of training and the utter dedication required in their training. When they are asked if they find this really hard work they answer “yes, but I enjoy every minute of it”. That is the approach we should have about this season.

If we continue to follow the pattern that Jesus sets for us Mark recounts he was “with the wild beasts” We can interpret these metaphorically as those things in our life that tear us apart. All the obsessive and compulsive pressures we put upon ourselves and others. Why not stop here for a moment and identify your own particular “wild beasts”? What is tearing you apart?

During the wilderness time Jesus began to see the world differently. It is this experience that is the content of the Good News that Mark describes Jesus coming into Galilee to proclaim. Jesus hearers are required to change the way they approach life to move away from their conventional thinking into the Good News of the Kingdom of God. It is interesting that Mark has Jesus return several times to a “lonely place” where presumably he re-activated this profound experience at the beginning of his ministry.

Lent is our time to either discover within ourselves the mystery of God’s love for us as a felt reality in the midst of our life. For some it may be a time to reactivate the experience we’ve already had. Either way it will lead us as Paul says away from the written letters of law that lead to death to living in the Spirit who gives life.