



Holy Guardian Angels Parish

Dear Friends,

Lent has begun. We've begun a season we are all too familiar with including what we do for the next 6 weeks. I'm sure you have asked yourself the question we ask each Lent, "What will I give up for Lent this year?" Why do we do that? Probably because most of us approach Lent as a season to confront my sins and do penance. But that puts the spot light on me - *my* sins, *my* penance, *my* getting to heaven - and not on the Lord. On Ash Wednesday we are admonished to "Repent and believe in the Gospel," which put the emphasis on the Lord. Besides, how many Lenten practices become like New Year's resolutions: we begin strong only to let it all slide away over time? *My* failure.

Dcn. Tom Carlson raised a good point last Sunday in his homily. Instead of asking what will I give up, he suggested we ask instead *what will I do* this Lent? Since we began this new parish of ours, we've been wrestling with the issue of Christ calling us to a different way to be "church"? The Holy Father has specifically pointed to what that new church should be: a congregation of *missionary disciples!* I realize that for many, myself included, the call to become a "missionary disciple" is scary.

What I'm hinting at is this: instead of looking to go back to "normal," this Lent we should be looking at how do we move forward, where do we go from here. The challenge being presented is to change what it means to be a Catholic and most of us are not fans of changing. We expect religion to be a comfort, the way things used to be. But what if "the way things used to be" is simply a rut we've become complacent living in? What if the Lord is calling on us to climb out of that rut onto a new path? Remember, the Great Commission of Jesus is "Go, make disciples."

This leads us right into the next section of the Creed we've started to examine. This section of the Creed is all about who Jesus is.

*I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ
the only begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light
true God from true God
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.*

This first sentence nails down our belief that Jesus is the one I owe total allegiance to, the one person I commit myself to entirely, obeying his commands. *Love one another as I have loved you.* There is no other authority or power on earth I choose to follow except Jesus, the *one* I will obey. Lent offers us the time to examine how I am following Christ and not my own desires. Am I willing to let go of what used to be and embrace the future Jesus is calling us to, especially if he calls me out of my comfort zone? *Take up your cross and follow me!* Do I really believe that Jesus holds divine power despite what the world says? *All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me! Go therefore and make disciples....*

*For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary
and became human.*

These words proclaim Jesus - true God from true God - to be true human at the same time. Whole sections of libraries hold innumerable volumes written in an attempt to explain these lines, as if we can comprehend the mystery of God. I'm reminded of the teachers of my youth saying, "Just accept it; there's no way we can understand it." How is it possible for one person to be both totally, completely God AND totally, completely human? It's impossible. Here, friends, is the crux of the faith. Either we accept and believe or we don't.

So, do we accept Jesus as the only one we will completely believe and totally follow? That's what we say when we profess "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ." And what if that "one Lord" is calling us to get out of our rut and onto a new path? Do we do it? This is where the tire hits the road. This is the foundation of our faith. Do we give total allegiance to Christ or not? Do we accept the Great Commission? Lent is the gift given us to search for answers to these questions.

Fr. Denis