

## First Sunday of Lent (C) Purification

Purification is the process of removing impurities or contaminants from something... we purify to make clean, safer or better. Water for example is purified to remove potential harmful elements and to make it drinkable. We have heard of stories of people drinking "bad water" or water that can make you sick. Unpurified water has the potential to make you ill, you can get parasites, gastrointestinal problems and it can even lead to death. Hence the need for purification.

Lent is a season of purification, it is us walking in the desert with the goal of removing impurities and contaminants, making us more Christlike. We started the Lenten season this past Ash Wednesday and the season is a forty day journey of purification. Not that we are to be purified just these forty days but that as a community, as a church, as a body we all join in, and admit that we need purification. The forty days should remind us of Noah and the flood, where the Lord purified the earth... it should remind us of the people of Israel going through the desert, they were being purified before reaching the promise land... it should remind us of the gospel reading from today, Jesus being led by the Spirit into the desert. **But why would Jesus go to the desert, he didn't need to be purified?** I believe that he entered the desert to teach us **what** we needed to be **purified from**, what are the **impurities** or **contaminants**. I believe that he also entered to show us **how to be purified**.

### What do we need purification from?

The three temptations that Jesus faced in the desert tell us what we need purification from, and they correlate to the fall and the temptations that Adam and Eve faced. The book of Genesis when recalling the fall in chapter 3 verse 6 states *"So when the woman saw that the **tree was good for food**, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree **was to be desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate"*, **there are our impurities/temptations**. Three main impurities that we need to be cleansed from. Ask yourself why did she ate the fruit? "the woman saw that the tree was good for food", desire of the flesh also known as pleasure. She also ate because she saw *"that it was a delight to the eyes"*, desire of the eye, also known as possession/power. The final reason why she ate was the desire to make one wise *"that the tree was to be desired to make one wise"*, also known as pride. The three main impurities that we need to be cleansed from are the impurities that have hindered us since the fall. **Desire of the flesh or pleasure, desire of the eye or possession/power, desire to be wise or pride**. At times referred to as the three P's... Pleasure, Possession/Power, Pride.

Jesus entered the desert to undo, to show us that those impurities **can** be purified. When the devil approached him, he knew that Jesus was hungry and tempted him with **pleasure**, turn that stone into bread (delight of the flesh). Then the devil offered Jesus power, glory and possessions if Jesus worshiped him. The impurity of possession/power (delight of the eye). Finally, the devil attempted to get Jesus to be proud and test God by throwing himself off the temple, **pride**. The same impurities that Adam and Eve encountered. Which are the same temptations or impurities that you and I face today, the temptation of **pleasure, power/possessions and pride**. If you look around our world today, the reason why we have wars is because someone allowed pleasure/power or pride to get a hold of them. If you think about world poverty, the reason it exists is because one way or another I might think that if I share what I have there would not be enough for me... **possession**. Think about discrimination, bullying, abuse, criminal acts, they can be manifestations of me thinking I am better than you or I deserve this more than you... **Pride**. Think about it in your personal life, how are pleasure, power/possessions and pride being manifested, what sins do you confess the most?

Lent is a period of purification, is a period of letting go and letting God, is a time to ask our Lord to show us our impurities/temptations and help us get purified.

### **How can I be purified?**

During our Lenten journey the church teaches us or gives us the antidote to the temptations, it tells us how to be purified. **The three pillars of lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving**, they were not given to us at random they were given to us because they are the tools of purification. They are what combat the impurities, what cleanses us, Jesus himself told us, **when you pray... when you fast... when you give alms...** they are not suggestions, they are expectations because they **are our tools for purification**. If you struggle with the temptation of pleasure/desire of the flesh, **fasting** is the antidote or tool because it forces you to withhold the desires of the flesh... if you struggle with the temptation of possession/power, desire of the eye, **almsgiving** is the antidote or tool because it forces you to **give** rather than take or receive, it makes you get out of your desires and think of the needs of others... if you struggle with the temptation of pride, **prayer** is the antidote or tool because it forces you to recognize that you need help, it humbles you to think that you can't do it alone that you need a greater power.

We all need to pray, fast and give alms, not just during this season but this Lenten season I challenge you to think about **your** greatest struggle, which temptation/impurity

is your “kryptonite” and let us walk **together** this Lenten season, asking our Lord to help us in the journey of purification.