

FEBRUARY 21, 2021
Sunday of the 1st Week of Lent
Mark 1: 12-15

“REPENT AND BELIEVE.”

“Saint Jerome, the brilliant doctor of the Church, lived for twenty-five years in the cave where the Child Jesus was born. One time he prayed to Jesus thus: “Dear Child, you have suffered much to save me; how can I make amends?” “What can you give me, Jerome?” a Voice was heard. “I will spend my entire life in prayer, and I will offer all my talents into Your hands,” Jerome replied. “You do that to glorify Me, but what more can you give to Me?” the Voice asked again. “I will give all my money to the poor,” Jerome exclaimed. The Voice said: “Give your money to the poor; it would be just as if you were giving it to Me. But what else can you give to Me?” Saint Jerome became distraught and said: “Lord, I have given You everything! What is there left to give?” “Jerome, you have not yet given Me your sins,” the Lord replied. “Give them to Me so I can erase them.” With these words Jerome burst into tears and spoke, “Dear Jesus, take all that is mine and give me all that is Yours.” Lent is the time to give our sins to God with repentant hearts.”¹

My brothers and sisters, as we begin the Season of Lent, we are all invited to be one with Jesus. Like Him, we need to be strong to the temptations of Satan, be vigilant and aware to the wishes of the material world for us to be away from the real world – the Kingdom of God. How can we achieve and join this Kingdom? In our gospel for today, Jesus gave us two things to follow: Repent and Believe. “Repent means to turn away from sin and wrong-doing in order to follow God's way of love, truth, and moral goodness. When we submit to God's rule in our lives and believe in the Gospel message the Lord Jesus gives us the grace and power to live a new way of life as citizens of his kingdom. He gives us grace to renounce the kingdom of darkness ruled by pride, sin, and Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44) and the ruler of this present world (John 12:31). Repentance is the first

¹ www.stories4homilies.co

step to surrendering my will and my life to God. Repentance means to change - to change my way of thinking, my attitude, my disposition, and the way I choose to live my life - so that the Lord Jesus can be the Master and Ruler of my heart, mind, and will. Whatever stands in the way of God's will and plan for my life must be surrendered to him - my sinful pride, my rebellious attitude, and stubborn will to do as I please rather than as God pleases. True repentance requires a contrite heart and true sorrow for sin (Psalm 51:17) and a firm resolution to avoid the near occasion of sin. To believe is to take Jesus at his word and to recognize that God loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to free us from bondage to sin and harmful desires. God made the supreme sacrifice of his Son on the cross to bring us back to a relationship of peace, friendship, and unity with our Father in heaven.”²

My brothers and sisters, let us come back to God, let us repent our sins and believe that God will transform us to be better. Let us do sacrifices and service for others as we do the best that we can to be with Him this Lent. How do we ‘improve’ our Lenten observance this year? Let us give up: “GIVE UP grumbling! Instead, “In everything give thanks.” Constructive criticism is OK, but “moaning, groaning, and complaining” are not Christian disciplines. GIVE UP 10 to 15 minutes in bed! Instead, use that time in prayer, Bible study and personal devotion. GIVE UP looking at other people’s worst points. Instead concentrate on their best points. We all have faults. It is a lot easier to have people overlook our shortcomings when we overlook theirs first. GIVE UP speaking unkindly. Instead, let your speech be generous and understanding. It costs so little to say something kind and uplifting. Why not check that sharp tongue at the door? GIVE UP your hatred of anyone or anything! Instead, learn the discipline of love. “Love covers a multitude of sins.” GIVE UP your worries and anxieties! Instead, trust God with them. Anxiety is spending emotional energy on something we can do nothing about, like tomorrow! Live today and let God’s grace be sufficient. GIVE UP TV one evening a week! Instead, (visit) message or

² www.dailyscripture.net

call or have face time with some lonely or sick person. There are those who are isolated by illness or age. Why isolate yourself in front of the “tube?” Give someone a precious gift: your time! GIVE UP buying anything but essentials for yourself! Instead, give the money to God. The money you would spend on the luxuries could help someone meet basic needs. We are called to be stewards of God’s riches, not consumers. GIVE UP judging by appearances and by the standard of the world! Instead, learn to give up yourself to God. There is only one who has the right to judge, Jesus Christ.”³

Let this be our prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen me as I observe Lenten discipline. May I be with You through giving up and sharing my self, my resources, and my life for others. Dear Jesus, take all that is mine and give me all that is Yours. Amen.”

³ Craig Gates, Jackson, MS, “What to Give up for Lent”, www.stories4homilies.co