

1 Lent 2023

[26 February 2023](#)

Two struggles that I take into Lent...

Jesus who is God... "... shared our human nature in all things,
but sin."

We believe that... I believe that.

Jesus never sinned.

The struggle is we may think... well, that removes Him from our experience,
that distances Him from our reality, our lives.

Not So!

He never sinned but he does share with us temptation.

He shares our struggle with temptation.

He shares our battle and war against the enemy's
ways of wanting to entice, seduce, deceive, and convince
and make us settle for less...

so that we ... as Adam and Eve found in succumbing to
and losing their battle with the enemy...

so that we can declare that we know better than God.

And in knowing better than God...

that makes us our own god.

You name it... any hot social issue and controversies of our times,
bottom line...

is declaring that we know better than God

and we ourselves are our own god...

that would be the god of "me, myself, and I."

Jesus was tempted to believe this.

The enemy wanted to twist Jesus' mission and ministry.

Jesus' constant response... we hear it all the way to the end...

"not my will but your will be done."

The cross... whose shadow we gather in during Lent...

the vertical bar is the letter "I."

the horizontal bar, crosses the "I" out.

That's the victory of the cross... the victory

of "getting over ourselves as the center of the universe"
and getting on with "life is not about me,"
and being like children in the loving, dependent arms of the Father.

Jesus never sinned.
But he did know about temptation.
So that he can know our struggle
and be our protection and strength.

All of that has been playing on mind,
that leads me to the second struggle I take into Lent this year...
it has to do with a prayer
that we all know... the Apostles Creed.
We pray this prayer to begin the rosary,
usually this is the Creed that we recite
especially during the Lent and Easter Season because
it is more closely connected to our baptismal promises
that we renew at the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday
The Apostles Creed as opposed to the Nicene Creed which is much longer.

Anyway, there is a line in that prayer that states,
that Jesus descended into Hell.
Now I've always prayed the prayer and admittedly
I have been bothered by that phrase,
and other times, I say the words without thinking much about them.
And I'm the only one...
In my 25 years of being a priest,
for the first time, someone finally asked me
what those words meant.
I was forced to give some kind of answer on the spot.
I don't remember what I said exactly.

But it came back to me for all of you this morning...
When we hear the word Hell ... especially in Church,
our minds probably turn to the spiritual world...
I suppose it conjures up fire and brimstone,
the devils and demons... and it should.
Hell was also, in a sense, the holding place ... the waiting room

so to speak
of those who awaited the Messiah... those who awaited the resurrection...
so that would include those who never knew
the Son of God... those faithful men and women
who lived before God was born into this world in the person of Jesus...
that would include the people of the Old Testament...
Abraham and Sarah,
Kings like David or Solomon,
the Prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elijah...
and our first parents ... Adam and Eve...
there is actually an ancient homily about this line in the Apostles Creed...
"Jesus descended into Hell"...
we read it on Holy Saturday, Office of Readings...
where Jesus goes into that holding place...
he enters that waiting room of our ancestors of faith,
he descends into Hell
and he looks specifically for our first parents...
he is looking intensely for Adam
to grasp him by the hand and to raise him up into the
light and glory of Heaven.
Jesus who is the New Adam who is raised,
goes into Hell
and saves the Old Adam who fell.
So why do I tell you this ...

He knows your struggle,
and without exception... there is struggle in each of us in this room...
with self, with faith, with family, friends,
with love and life,
with work or no work,
with purpose and meaning...
he knows the struggle and the temptations.
Jesus knows yours and mine,
because he's been there... he shares it with us.
So we aren't alone.

Jesus has even gone to a place no one wants to go...
Jesus has descended into the pits of Hell...

a place so dismal, so void and empty, so self-serving,
Dante would say... not burning hot with fire but rather colder than ice...
Jesus goes there
so that we know ... he shares everything with us...
even the reality of Hell...
but he willingly went there, descended there
so that we know there is no place
that he would not go for us...
there isn't a Hell that exists
where the love of Jesus cannot enter
and walk through and come looking for us.

So at the top of this Lent...
know this...
he shares everything with you...
your temptation,
your struggle,
your battle, your war...
He wants you not to choose sin as well.
And know this...
there is no place he would not go for you
even Hell
the Hell of the spiritual world
or
the Hell of your own making in this world
where His love would not descend
in order to look for you, search for you - intensely.

As we begin this Lent... know that.
To save you from sin... he doesn't know sin...
but He shares everything else with you.