

**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT – B – FEBRUARY 22, 2015**

**READ PASSAGE FROM MARK:**

**“THE SPIRIT DROVE JESUS INTO THE DESERT”**

**CAN YOU IMAGINE A 7 YR. SITTING HERE HEARING THAT.....**

**MY 7 YR. OLD IMAGINATION.....**

**4W DRIVE JEEP HEADING OUT INTO THE DESERT  
JESUS IN THE PASSENGER SEAT AND A "GHOST" AT THE WHEEL**

**AT LEAST, THAT IS MY IMAGE....**

**"THE SPIRIT DROVE JESUS INTO THE DESERT"**

**SOUNDS LIKE JESUS DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO GO INTO THE DESERT,  
INTO THE WILDERNESS, DOES IT????**

**CAN YOU BLAME HIM.....40 DAYS IN THE DESERT, IN THE WILDERNESS  
NOT TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE BEATING DOWN THE GATES TO DO THAT,  
UNLESS IT'S THE MIDDLE OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA AND YOU HAVE AIR  
CONDITIONING, AND A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD, THREE SQUARE MEALS A  
DAY...A POOL, ETC.....**

**(THESE DAYS, I GUESS, THE DESERT IS LOOKING PRETTY INVITING  
ACTUALLY)**

**BUT THAT WAS NOT THE CASE.....JUST THE DESERT, JUST  
WILDERNESS.....AND EVIDENTLY, WILD BEASTS...NOT TOO INVITING  
A PREVIEW OF THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN, I WOULD SAY....**

**BUT NEVERTHELESS, THE SPIRIT DROVE JESUS INTO THE DESERT.....  
THAT MAKES IT VERY, VERY UNAPPLEALING, NOT ONLY INTO THE  
WILDERNESS, BUT SOMEONE ELSE IS DRIVING.....**

***JESUS IS NOT EVEN IN CONTROL....***

***THAT'S AS BAD AS IT GET!!!!***

***YOU'RE IN THE WILDERNESS AND SOMEONE ELSE IS DRIVING....***

***SOMEONE ELSE IS CALLING THE SHOTS.....***

***THAT'S THE EPITOME OF VULNERABILITY.....AND FEAR.....***

***AND WE DON'T LIKE IT***

***YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN THERE????***

***YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF THERE AS SOON AS YOU CAN DON'T YOU????***

***YOU CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO REMAIN THERE FOR FORTY DAYS...***

***THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS - HE REMAINED THERE FOR FORTY DAYS...***

***HE REMAINED....HE STAYED WITH IT....HE DIDN'T LEAVE.....***

***THE SAME WORD - MARY REMAINED AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS***

***MY GUESS IS THAT IT WAS A SIMILAR CHALLENGE....***

***AND I TAKE THAT NUMBER 40 AS BEING SYMBOLIC.....***

***LIKE THE FORTY DAY FLOOD IN THE STORY OF NOAH...***

***LIKE THE FORTY YEARS THE JEWS WANDERED IN THE DESERT...***

***FORTY IS TELLING US ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF TIME IT TAKES TO***

***COMPLETE THE PROCESS FULLY.....***

***TAKING ALL THE TIME NECESSARY TO FINISH THE JOB, AS IT WERE...***

***AS IN 40 WEEKS FOR A COMPLETE PREGANANCY.....***

***IF YOU FINISH THE PROCESS BEFORE YOU REACH 40 YOU ARE***

***ENDANGERING THE PROCESS....IN DANGER OF ABORTING IT***

***YOU NEED TO REMAIN TRUE TO THE PROCESS UNTIL THE END....***

*YOU CAN'T TAKE SHORT CUTS....ABORT THE PROCESS*

*AND LEAVE AFTER FOUR WEEKS -AS MUCH AS YOU WOULD LIKE*

*YOU NEED TO BE PATIENT AND STAY WITH THE PROCESS...*

*WITH THE TEMPTATIONS, WITH THE STRUGGLE WITH THE ADVERSARY*

*IT IS NOT EASY AT ALL...*

*ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU ARE IN THE WILDERNESS AND SOMEONE ELSE IS*

*IN CONTROL.....*

*FOR AN INDIVIDUAL THAT COULD BE A SUDDEN AND SERIOUS*

*SURGERY.....FOR YOU OR YOUR CHILD.....*

*THAT IS WHAT IT WAS FOR ME 8 YRS AGO....THE HEART ATTACK AND BY  
PASS SURGERY*

*FOR SOME ELSE IT COULD BE A DIVORCE.....*

*IT COULD BE THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE, A CHILD, A PARENT.....*

*YOUR CHILD IS IN SERIOUS, SERIOUS TROUBLE....*

*IT COULD BE THE LOSS OF A JOB.....THE LOSS OF A HOUSE....*

*BUT IT CAN ALSO APPLY TO A COMMUNITY, I BELIEVE, AS WHEN A*

*COMMUNITY IS DRIVEN INTO THE WILDERNESS, INTO THE DESERT.....*

*THAT IS WHAT I'M THINKING OF TODAY....*

*WHEN A COMMUNITY, LIKE QAC, IS DRIVEN INTO THE WILDERNESS TO*

*STRUGGLE WITH THE ADVERSARY, TO STRUGGLE WITH SOME DIFFICULT*

*AND CHALLENGING ISSUES.....*

*CERTAINLY WE AS A COMMUNITY ARE FACING THE LENTEN SEASON AND*

*ITS CHALLENGES.....*

*BUT I'M ALSO THINKING OF TWO OTHER CHALLENGES THAT HAVE COME*

**OUR WAY RECENTLY.....**

**ONE, IS THE ARCHDIOCESAN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN (NOT THE ANNUAL CMA) - WHICH WE HAVEN'T EVEN BEGUN YET**

**THE OTHER IS THE ISSUE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN OUR LITURGY.....**

**BOTH OF THESE ISSUES MAKE MANY OF US VERY UNCOMFORTABLE**

**TAKE THE ARCHDIOCESAN CAMPAIGN....**

**SOME OF US ARE VERY AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE INSTITUTIONAL**

**CHURCH - ESP. AS IT IS EXPRESSED LOCALLY IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI.....**

**E.G. THE CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE AND MORE RECENTLY THE POLICY**

**REQUIRING A TEACHER EMPLOYED BY THE ARCHDIOCESE TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT TO NOT ADVOCATE PUBLICLY FOR GAY MARRIAGE**

**I UNDERSTAND THESE VIEWPOINTS....**

**SOME HAVE FEELINGS ABOUT SHARING YOUR QAC CONTRIBUTION**

**RECORDS WITH THE ARCHDIOCESE - I UNDERSTAND THAT**

**ON THE ISSUE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE SOME STRONGLY SUPPORT IT AND OTHERS QUESTION ITS NECESSITY AND EVEN ONE FAMILY HAS**

**DECIDED TO LEAVE THE COMMUNITY BECAUSE WE ARE**

**EXPERIMENTING WITH INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN OUR READINGS**

**WHICH WE WILL CONTINUE ON AN EXPERIMENTAL BASIS THROUGHOUT LENT....**

**BEFORE WE EVALUATE IT AFTER EASTER AND MAKE SOME LONG RANGE DECISIONS ON THE ISSUE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE...**

**SO WE HAVE A WIDE RANGE OF STRONG FEELINGS ON BOTH OF THESE**

*ISSUES -*

*THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AND THE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE....*

*AND WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY THAT ...*

*WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO ME.....*

*IS THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO REMAIN IN THE DESERT FOR THE FULL  
FORTY DAYS WITH THE COMMUNITY AND TRUST THE STRUGGLE, TRUST  
THE PROCESS - TRUST THAT ANGELS WILL APPEAR TO MINISTER TO  
US....*

*THE WILD BEASTS WILL NOT BE VICTORIOUS....*

*WE WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ARCHDIOCESAN CAMPAIGN AND WE WILL  
MAKE WHATEVER CONTRIBUTION WE CAN OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS...*

*WE WILL EVENTUALLY ADOPT A MATURE AND BALANCED APPROACH TO  
THE ISSUE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN OUR LITURGY AND IN THE  
PROCESS WE WILL GROW IN AN APPRECIATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF  
HOW WE ADDRESS GENDER ISSUES IN OUR LANGUAGE...*

*UNFORTUNATELY WE WILL NEED TO REMAIN IN THE WILDERNESS MORE  
THAN FORTY DAYS.....*

*BOTH ISSUES COULD GO WELL INTO THE SUMMER BEFORE WE  
EXPERIENCE SOME REAL RESOLUTION...*

*BUT WE WILL KEEP IN MIND THAT JESUS REMAINED IN THE DESERT  
UNTIL THE STRUGGLE WAS COMPLETE....*

*WE WILL ALSO KEEP IN MIND THAT MARY REMAINED STANDING AT THE  
FOOT OF THE CROSS UNTIL THE STRUGGLE WAS COMPLETE*

***I READ THIS GREAT ARTICLE YESTERDAY ON EXTREMISM IN OUR SOCIETY....***

***BASICALLY HE SAID THAT FUNDAMENTALISM AND SECULARISM ARE TWO EXTREMES IN OUR SOCIETY....***

***FUNDAMENTALISM IS FAITH WITHOUT REASON***

***SECULARISM IS REASON WITHOUT FAITH....***

***WE NEED BOTH.....FAITH AND REASON -***

***EVEN THOUGH IT IS AN ONGOING STRUGGLE TO INTEGRATE THEM***

***IT IS SO EASY TO TAKE A BLACK AND WHITE APPROACH TO LIFE BUT IT IS NOT A MATURE APPROACH...IT IS NOT A BALANCED APPROACH***

***THERE IS SO MUCH GREY.....***

***WE DON'T NEED AN EITHER/OR APPROACH AS MUCH AS WE NEED A BOTH/AND APPROACH***

***WE IN THE QAC ARE TRYING TO PAY ATTENTION TO BOTH SIDES OF THESE ISSUES....***

***THE ARCHDIOCESAN CAMPAIGN AS WELL AS THE GENDER ISSUE....***

***IT'S NOT AN EITHER/OR QUESTION BUT A BOTH/AND***

***PLEASE REMAIN WITH US IN THE WILDERNESS TRUSTING THAT BETTER DAYS ARE AHEAD....***