

First Sunday of Lent 2019

My beloved brothers and sisters, St. Dominic, when going to a new city or town to preach, would always cry out: “Cienegas y nada, cienegas y nada! Ashes and nothing, ashes and nothing!” What are we truly seeking in life? What really matters? Where are we seeking fulfillment, and are we finding it; or, are we leading meaningless and empty lives? Today, Jesus invites us to go into the desert with Him for the next 40 days, to explore these difficult questions. Are you seeking a meaningful and joyful life, then take up the challenge of Jesus and go with Him into the desert of your life with Him; here is where you will be confronted by your true reality: in the desert, with Christ, we decide who will be first in our lives: God, or myself?

The time of Lent is our desert. Jesus has given us this time to listen more closely to God, to draw near to Him who has drawn near to us- don't neglect His invitation. He gives us this time to grow in our relationship with Him- don't neglect His invitation. The Ashes we received on Ash Wednesday remind us that everything in this world comes to an end, we are going to die. Seek that which will never die, and in Who we will live in the fullest sense of that word! It means putting God first in my life, and Jesus shows us how to do so!

It is in the desert experience that Jesus comes face to face with the evil one who is always seeking to drag us into his demonic despair. He does so in three different ways: By making a god out of our personal comfort; the devil seeks to tempt Jesus by putting His personal comfort against His Father's will. Food is a basic necessity of life, while it may fill our bodies, it will never satisfy our hearts. Neither will any of our passions: fun, sex, money, leisure, other persons etc., etc. God has created us for a personal relationship with Himself. We have a God shaped chamber in our hearts that can only be filled with Him!

The devil seeks to deceive Jesus by pride, I'll give you success and power, only you will have to compromise your values and worship me. Insisting on the values of the Gospel will only get you killed, and no one will like you! Success will never fill our hearts!

The devil tells Jesus to seek the esteem of others, throw yourself off the Temple walls, God will save you! People will be so impressed they will flock to you! Hollywood and Politics are full of those seeking the esteem of others, look at what it has produced! Esteem and power will never fill our hearts!

Jesus' response must become our response: "Seek first the Kingdom of God- for only God can fill my heart!"

Jesus asks us today: "Where are you seeking meaning and fulfillment? If you seek it anywhere except in my Father's will, you will find only emptiness and despair!" Seek fulfillment, rather, in an intimate friendship with Jesus, this is where we will find happiness, and meaning. Everything else is just ashes and nothing!