

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Mar 9th 2014**

“He fasted for forty days and forty nights” Matthew 4:2

As I read the Gospel reading for this First Sunday of Lent, I was reminded of the Global Prayer Vigil for Syria Pope Francis held on September 7, 2013. Pope Francis called for a global day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria. Pope Francis invited us to follow the example of a fasting Jesus. Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline. Fasting and prayer can (and does) bring about change!

It wasn't until my conversion to Catholicism that I became interested in the spiritual discipline of fasting. During my first fast which took place during Lent, I was quite surprised when I had a religious experience that helped draw me closer to God. I found that a transformation had taken place interiorly when I denied myself. I had the sense that fasting allowed the Holy Spirit to reveal to myself a clearer picture of my true spiritual condition.

Over the years, I have opened myself to different types of fasting. Last year during Lent, I abstained from playing the computer game Words With Friends (WWF). While on vacation two years prior with my daughter and niece, they introduced me to WWF and it had become apparent to me that “giving up” WWF would require a sacrifice. In place of WWF, I strove to spend that time reading and contemplating Scripture. That experience was quite powerful. It has been through the spiritual practice of fasting that I received an important insight. When I am convinced that I don't have time for certain practices or activities in my life, I do find the time for other things. While I do continue to play WWF, I strive to obtain a better balance of all activities in my life.

I am still uncertain about what direction I am headed towards this Lent with the practice of fasting. What I do know is that I will do something. Feel free to send me an e-mail to let me know of your experience.

Pope Francis will begin his annual Lenten retreat today through Friday, March 14 at the Pauline Fathers' retreat and conference center in Ariccia, a town about 20 miles southeast of Rome. While many of us are unable to make a week long retreat, we have been invited to click on the following link for a retreat on the Spirituality of Pope Francis:

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/PopeFrancisRetreat/>

Dear Good and Gracious God, We are so grateful for the personal witness of fasting given to us by your Son, Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that through the important spiritual practice of fasting, that we experience the power of personal conversion and transformation which can bring about the conversion and transformation of nations. Amen

Jan Schnack - Creighton University Student