

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 12th 2015

We writers of these reflections get one about every six weeks, which means that in general I have one Lent contribution, and this is it.

I have to admit that I have gone much of my life half dreading Lent. As a kid I associated it with having to give up candy or something. As theologically thin as those sacrifices might have been, they at least communicated to me the specialness of Easter.

As an adult I still give up something, though I try to do some more affirmative things such as praying more. I have to admit that Lent makes me uncomfortable in some ways, but actually that's a good thing.

Jesus hits on it in today's Gospel when he refers to a kingdom divided against itself being unable to stand. (Abraham Lincoln famously appropriated that phrase when he referred to the attempted secession of the South in the Civil War.) But the uncomfortable truth is that Lent reminds us that we are all houses divided against ourselves. We have one foot in material concerns and hopefully at least one foot in the spiritual world. There's nothing wrong in and of itself in having some material concerns. We need to eat and many of us have families to care for.

The difficulty, however, is that it's all too easy to let those concerns push matters of the soul into a corner that's reserved for one hour at Mass each week. My best Lents have been when I've made a sacrifice that's enough to nag at me and remind me that I shouldn't try to divide the kingdoms of Heaven and Earth, as easy as that be to do. So I'm praying for all of us to have good Lents, even if we feel a little uncomfortable.

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