

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Feb 19th 2016

Lent isn't just about giving up candy or soda; it's about giving up sin. It's about giving up anything that keeps you away from God and spirituality. And as we see in the first reading, there is a huge benefit to giving up sin. Anyone who turns away from sin will be rewarded. Anyone, even someone very sinful, can turn away from that sin, and God will rejoice at the conversion. God does not rejoice in punishing sinners, but rather in having sinners turn away from sin to be reclaimed. Of course, you have to stay away. A virtuous person who turns toward sin will suffer the same fate as the unrepentant sinner. It's an on-going process. You can't just turn away from sin like giving something up for Lent. You can't 'give up' sin for 40 days, and then start up again. But even the worst sinners who truly turn their lives around and stay that way can be saved.

The problem can be, as we see in the Gospel, that we're not just talking about 'big' sins. Even things that seem 'little' can take us away from God and his mercy. Sure, we can say, "Oh, I've never killed anyone or done anything horrible like that. I'm fine." But have we ever 'wished someone dead'? Jesus says that anger toward our brother takes us away from God as well. Anger and name-calling separates us from our family and from God. In condemning others, we are in effect condemning ourselves.

Lent is about giving up more than candy. It's about giving up our negative attitudes and whatever keeps us from God. It's about reconciliation. By reconciling with others, we take the first step to reconciling with God and the Church.

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