

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Feb 12th 2013

Today is Shrove Tuesday, the day before the start of Lent. The name grows out of the tradition of receiving absolution for sin before the Lenten season begins. It is a day of human traditions. It is a day that better known as Mardi Gras. People choose different ways of preparing for Lent. Going to Confession is one option. Celebrating by indulging is another. In 1497, this was the day of Savonarola's Bonfire of the Vanities. In my family, it is a time when we are left feeling overwhelmed by the duties of this world.

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.

The first reading from Genesis reminds us that the world is God's creation and as such the world and the things of the world are not to be shunned. As a physicist, on my good days, I am able to see the universe as a gift, something worth discovering, something that leaves me with a sense of wonder. The Responsorial Psalm reminds us of the treasures that God has put before us. I wish the Gospel had continued with the next two verses from Mark: He summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile."

When I imagine myself in the context of today's Gospel. I can see that religious laws have a practical value. I do not think that Jesus is promoting the violation of rules. My feeling is that He is making the point that faith and what we choose to do are intimately tied together. Action solely out of duty to sets of laws can leave one unfulfilled. I believe that Jesus' message is that action growing out of something more than human constructs adds meaning to our lives. I feel he is calling us to respond to something greater that requires us to answer the question "Viewing the world from God's perspective, what should we be doing the day before Lent?"

My prayer today starts with appreciation for our world. I follow this with an intercession for personal reconciliation. I end my prayer with an appeal for the insight into the nature of God's call for my personal Lenten action.

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