

# **1st Sunday of Lent**

## **Cycle B**

### **February 26-27, 2012**

#### **Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air**

#### **Normandy**

One summer I was on a parish trip to France and we visited the Normandy coast where D-Day took place.

We went to Omaha Beach – part of the beach front where 6,000 Allied ships dropped off thousands and thousands of soldiers for the invasion of Europe. We stood on the top of the Nazi Sea Wall and could just imagine the terrible, bloody carnage that took place.

We walked through the German artillery bunkers. But what moved me most was walking through the American Cemetery.

There are 9,500 crosses or Stars of David over the remains of each dead American soldier. By the end of the Normandy campaign, there were 425,000 Allied and German troops killed, wounded, or missing.

As I stood in that cemetery, I felt keenly aware of the great force of evil that the world was caught up in at that time. I felt very aware of the forces of evil that are much bigger than we are as individuals.

#### **Lent and These Forces**

Maybe all of us have had this awareness of forces bigger than ourselves.

There are these powers in the universe that just seem to catch us up and swirl around us. Often we can live oblivious, unaware of all of this, but then comes the Season of Lent.

Lent makes us aware that much of life is a complicated dance between good and evil, between light and darkness. Much of life is a conflict, on the one hand, between charity, justice, and peace, and, on the one hand, self-absorption, greed, and hostility.

#### **Jesus and These Forces**

Today's gospel tells us that Jesus goes into the desert and wrestles with these forces of darkness, the same ones that we wrestle with.

Jesus confronts the same choices that we confront. And the Lenten lesson is that what we choose shapes our soul and shapes who we are as persons.

- Jesus chooses Faith in the Father in the face of temptation to believe in something else.
- He chooses Trust in the face of overwhelming darkness.

- And he chooses sacrificial acts of Love in the face of insult and anger.

### **We Today and These Forces**

The Lenten lesson is that we also must make choices in the face of the conflicting forces around us.

Jesus calls us to choose Faith. Sometimes a life without faith or practiced faith is tempting.

But Jesus invites us to believe in a Higher Power and to be anchored and empowered here. He wants us to make contact with God through the Eucharist and to make this a priority over shopping and sports.

And he wants us to make time also for private prayer and reflection. Jesus calls us to share this Faith with at least one person today.

And then Jesus calls us to choose Hope. On a personal level, maybe we feel unjustly treated at work or unfairly talked about by others.

On a global level, there are major economic problems that are challenging our greatest minds. But with all of this, the power of Hope lies not in what is around us but in what is within us.

The power of Hope lies in God's assurance of his constant presence with us and with all people. Jesus calls us to share this Hope with at least one person today.

And then Jesus calls us to choose Love. There is much demonization today of those who are different from us or who disagree with us.

And there is much insensitivity for the life of the unborn or the life of those dying from malnutrition and starvation. But with all of this, the power of Love flows from the One who is Love itself.

This power of Love leads us to seek understanding, to build bridges, to find common ground and seek the common good of our country and of our world. Jesus calls us to share this Love with at least one person today.

### **Conclusion**

So, there are forces bigger than us and we have choices to make.

Lent makes us aware of this and makes us aware that our choices shape who we are as persons. They have eternal consequences.