

Rite of Election

St. Ann's Cathedral (2/10/08); St. Patrick's Co-Cathedral (2/17/08)

On a trip to El Salvador with a number of bishops, we witnessed a Salvadoran woman who had been praying in the Cathedral in San Salvador demonstrate great faith and love. She went up to another woman, obviously quite poor, and handed a coin to her and then embraced her. The woman herself was likely without many resources, but she shared what little she had with another poor woman as well as her compassion. She was neither powerful nor had possessions, nor would she ever be considered famous in any sense of the word (though you now know of her). But she showed us bishops the power of God at work, a holy use of possessions and what it means to be famous as a daughter of the Lord! It was evident to us that she loved God and showed it through her love of neighbor. Her baptism was real and true. Having just come from the Cathedral (either from Mass or Eucharistic adoration) she understood what it meant to be to Eucharistic. At least from what we could see outwardly, she had not fallen into the temptation that afflicts so many of us, i.e., to allow something or someone to take priority over God's will.

The temptations of Jesus as presented in the Gospel are really the temptations of every person. I usually refer to them as the "three P's": power, prestige and possessions. In and of themselves, they are good because we need a certain level of each to live dignified lives. When any or all of them take precedence in day to day living, we are being unfaithful to our baptismal commitments. More bluntly, we have chosen to embrace a sinful lifestyle. What is presented to us in the Gospel is a model as we ourselves face a variety of temptations: e.g., preferring to look good in the eyes of society rather than being faithful to church teaching; being consumed by material possessions, being consumed by

wants rather than needs, things owning us rather than us owning things; treating other people as objects for selfish purposes, the desire to have obsessive control over others. Of course, there are lots of other ways that temptation comes us to. The model set forth by Jesus is to surrender to the will and plan of the Father.

The Season of Lent invites us to reflect upon our baptism into Christ. Historically, Lent is a season for those who will be immersed into the waters of dying and rising, anointed with the sacred chrism and then be invited to share at the Lord's Table. Baptized, Confirmed and invited to participate fully in the Eucharist celebration, the Elect become full members of the Church, members of the Body of Christ. For those already baptized into the Christ but not in full communion with the Church, Lent is a time to prepare to renew their baptismal commitment. Prior to being fully initiated, the Elect - as well as the many who are received into full communion - must renew their faith.

At the Easter Vigil, you Elect as well as those being received into full communion will be asked to make the promises of faith. Do you reject Satan and all his works and all his empty promises? Do you believe in God the Father almighty, that he sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ for our salvation. Do you believe that Christ remains with us today through his Holy Spirit? Do you believe in one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church? Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins and the life to come? These are sacred promises to God and must not be made lightly. They expect that your lives will be lived in a certain way, i.e., the way of Christ.

In these remaining days of Lent, I urge you to reflect seriously on the commitment you are undertaking. What is expected of you is fully to

embrace the life of Christ and nothing less! Know that you will be in my prayers as well as those of your sponsors, families and parishioners throughout the diocese. I pray that the faith we celebrate at Easter may reflect a life in Christ that is as deep as that of a poor woman in San Salvador.