

## **Lent I - February 21, 2010**

### **The Very Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder**

“Lord, take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire for your Holy Gospel.” +Amen

On Friday afternoon at around 4pm I entered a Columbia Starbucks to continue working on today’s sermon. However it did not get off to a great start when the young woman behind the counter asked, “Father Phil, did you give up your iced quad venti non-fat latte for Lent?” She went on to remind me that I had last year. As I told her I had not, I wondered if God was speaking through her, and I immediately felt the guilt of my catholic school boy days and had a wilderness experience right then and there.

We are already five days into the 40 days of this holy season of Lent—and the Gospel of Luke appointed for this First Sunday of Lent reminds us of where the early Church derived the number of days for this season. Immediately after his baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Jesus goes into the wilderness for a period of forty days to fast and pray. This was an essential part of Christ’s preparation for the ministry and cross that awaited him.

We of course can only speculate about the way that Jesus must have felt; what was running through his mind, as he entered the wilderness? I believe that it must have been a spiritual wilderness as well as a physical one. Jesus went off to be in communion with God through prayer, meditation, and fasting. Perhaps in his humanity he had questions...perhaps he had fears? And in that silence and solitude, Christ had to face the temptations of the devil who sought to kill his dream and bring him down. Yet the faith and relationship that Jesus had with God sustained him as he proclaimed: *Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.*

Tom Ehrich, a Midwestern newspaper columnist once wrote a column entitled; *The Church should sing the fool's song of love.* This is a part of what he had to say, "The young heart cries out to be moved by love and beauty, especially by the pathos of lost love, unrequited love, painful love. The young heart senses that pain isn't the enemy, but rather numbness, dullness, overcompensating parents and rituals of conformity.

The young heart wants to walk home from school with friends and lovers and to talk deeply, dream eagerly, see the beauty in

everything and risk heartbreak. ‘Am I a fool to wait for you the way I do after school?’ I sure am, and I’ll wait again tomorrow.”

He goes on to say: “The anger that church people (sometimes) express comes across as vexation from not getting their way. Deep down though, I think it’s the betrayal of having one’s dreams ignored, manipulated, or trespassed on...It’s why greeting newcomers on Sunday is an ultimate expression of love honoring risk and desire. It’s why complainers should stop their public complaining, lest they kill another’s dream.”

He concludes: “Faith is about relationships. People will put up with budget meetings, classes hawking right-opinion...as long as they believe that someone cares and there is a chance they can, in effect, ‘walk home’ with a friend.”

Like the journey of Christ to the wilderness, you and I journey to the altar of the Lord because we too seek communion with God and with one another in community. We desire to worship the Lord our God and serve only him. Therefore this community of faith at Trinity must mirror both the practice of Jesus, as well as the hopes of his life, death, and resurrection.

Saint Paul wrote in his Letter to the Romans, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all of us and is generous to all who call on him. For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10) This is the amazing truth of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. As Jesus came to oneness and empowerment with God in the wilderness, we come to oneness and empowerment through this community of faith. The journey into Jesus Christ and toward the kingdom is a lifelong one in the Church...one where liturgy, vestments, flowers, music, and the buildings themselves are to the glory of God and assist us in seeing beyond the temporal. And all of these things are indeed temporal. Within the last two weeks we have had four deaths and will have had four services for members of this community of faith; two of the deaths tragically days apart within the same family. Our church is where we turn and are encouraged by each other, nourished by God’s Word, the music, and the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ...the place where hopefully we in both the sorrows and the joys are able to ‘walk home’ with a friend. May we faithfully walk together through these 40 days of Lent, and hold up one another in prayer and the love of Jesus Christ. **+AMEN.**