

So here is the plan for Lent.

Several weeks ago I began reading and reflecting and praying about the Gospel Readings of Lent.

After letting things percolate for a few days – I went back and read the Gospels again – this time looking for one word that I thought captured a meaning or a lesson from that Gospel.

So one word – for each Sunday.

Next, I looked for a picture that reflected the meaning of that one word.

So one word – one picture – for each Sunday of Lent.

So the process for every Sunday, will be me telling you how I arrived at my word.

Showing you a picture that captured that word for me.

And then leaving you with a few things to reflect upon.

Now my word – may not be your word – and my picture may not be your picture ----- SO, you are invited to get involved in this reflective process after you leave here today, and every Sunday of Lent.

After hearing the Gospel –perhaps even re-reading it again -- what is your word? Then just write it down on a piece a paper – and place it in the Baptismal Font.

And what is a picture that captures the meaning of your word? Find something in the newspaper, in a magazine, or on-line -- a picture – or it may be a headline – that captures your word --- bring that in – and place it in the Baptismal Font.

Then maybe come early to Mass – or stay late after Mass --- pick up someone else’s word or picture – see how other people have been moved to reflect on these particular Gospels – and then let that continue to feed your reflection for the coming weeks of Lent.

In this way, a picture will be worth a 1,000 words and a word will be worth a 1,000 pictures. . .

So, the first week, the first Sunday of Lent. As always we go to the desert with Jesus.

The desert is a very quiet place. It’s one of those places that are so quiet – you can hear your own heartbeat.

And the desert can be a very lonely place – there’s nobody else there but you. And so you have to learn how to be comfortable with just being by yourself – with no distractions, no noise, no sounds – just the quiet – and then, and then in that quiet --- the voice of God can speak to you.

The psychologist Carl Jung said years ago: “noise, busyness, and the crowds in our life – are not the work of the devil – they are the devil.”

All of those things – noise, busyness, crowds – that is always being with someone and never being alone --- keep us from nurturing the quiet we need in our lives – and keep us from becoming comfortable with just being by ourselves – with no distractions – and can keep us from listening to God.

So, I think to have a productive Lent –

- one that can inflame us with new hope.

-one that can purify our minds.

-one that can dispel the darkness of our hearts – and bring us new life in Christ ---

-- we have to deal with the noise, the busyness, and the crowds in our lives --- so we can LISTEN to the voice of God speaking to us.

We can’t have a productive Lent without going to the desert. And we can’t have a productive Lent without creating moments of quiet in our lives so that we can listen to where God wants to lead us.

And so the word of the week is LISTEN --- and hear is the picture –

LISTEN.

What are you going to do this LENT – to enter into the quiet of the desert – so that you can listen to the voice of God?