

**Homily for March 9, 2003  
1st Sunday of Lent B**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Genesis 9:8-15  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:12-15**

## *The future is in our hands, and God works through those hands to bring it about.*

Jesus must have sat down often to consider the state of the nation. He must have worried often about the leadership he saw around him, about the threat of war, about the future for his people and for his Jewish faith. He must have talked often about the temple and its services.

He must have done all that very often, since he was like us in all things but sin. He who was in no way immune to human weakness; he was intimately acquainted with every form human suffering. If this were not the case, then the salvation Jesus won for us by his death and resurrection would only be partial, not total, for according to our Catholic teaching, what Jesus did not assume, he did not save. So it is that we do not have a high priest “who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin,” says Hebrews chapter 4.

Surely, like us, Jesus must have thought about the future and about the need for peace. Like Jesus, when we think of those things, we compare the world in which we live with a vision of the world to come. Speaking about injustice, we know about justice.

Complaining about dishonesty, we imply honesty. Worrying about war and violence, we dream about peace. Protesting discrimination and violence, we suggest a more equitable world.

We do all this. We are all charged with vision; we are all full of hope. But we don't go any further, we don't move. We let be the status quo – the future, the hope for peace. We see as if blind. We hear as if deaf. We move as if paralyzed.

So did Jesus, up to the moment he entered that desert for those 40 long, very long days.

Full of spirit, he was challenging his spirit. Full of vision, he was facing his blindness. His ears ringing with the message, he was fighting his deafness. Asked to move, he had to overcome his lameness.

St. Mark's gospel says Jesus was tempted, shocked and shaken, fighting with all that held him back, struggling with everything that kept him small, restricted, paralyzed and fruitless, fighting evil itself.

But what about us and our temptations? We often blame ourselves for being tempted. If we were really good, we think, we wouldn't be so troubled. Nonsense! Temptation is not sin. Lent is not a time for turning away from temptations. Rather, we meet it head on like Jesus did in the desert. Through fasting, prayer, and sharing of our time, talent and treasure we encounter

the contrary spirits that try to dissuade us, distract us, keep us paralyzed and heedless. By making ourselves still more powerless through prayer, fasting and kindness, we invite the invasion of God right where we need it most – so that the strength we begin to live is no longer our own but is truly of the Spirit of God.

“Repent and believe the Good News,” says Jesus in Mark chapter 1. Jesus invites us to follow him. His life, death and resurrection show us what we can do as well. But before turning to us, before inviting others, he first fought with and lived with his own temptations and invited God to be with him throughout.

We can no longer just complain about others, forgetting about ourselves. We can no longer think that the world will change and our vision be fulfilled without ourselves being changed and moved. That is what Jesus learned in the desert, and that is why he came out if it – himself changed – to shout to us: “The time is right, the days are fulfilled, I overcame what holds you down. I could do it, you can do it. Don’t worry about the future, but pray, work for peace.”

As I mentioned last week, there is a book now placed at the shrine of Mary with names of those who are in active duty military. We shall be praying for them – a human face on our prayer for peace through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace. And we’re praying for our future – praying for our parish convocation to take place on Thursday the 22nd of May, to which all are invited, just two hours of time required. We pray for our church, our archdiocese as we

plan for the future. We shall be invited to be part of that planning process as our prayer, fasting, and deeds of kindness make way for God’s strength to be with us and to give us the strength we need.

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