



Romans 10:8b-13 Luke 4:1-13

“When you can’t do it alone”

A story, perhaps true, perhaps not - but a remarkable story nonetheless ... It is said that when Leonardo da Vinci was painting the famous Last Supper in Milan, he decided to use the faces of local residents for the apostles and Jesus. He decided to begin with the face of Judas. He went out into the streets to look for a person who looked sad, disorderly, dejected, even vile. He walked around for quite a while observing the people until he found a young man who, sadly, seemed to fit the picture of what he thought Judas would look like.

As the young man sat for the painting, he asked Leonardo what the mural was all about. Leonardo began to tell him about the life of Jesus, his teachings, his miracles, his suffering, his death and resurrection. The young man was quite taken with the story, as no one had ever told it to him with such detail and passion.

Many months later, Leonardo completed the faces of all of the disciples. Now, he needed only one more model, that of Jesus. He returned to the streets of Milan, looking for a person who seemed filled with goodness and kindness, someone who showed charity and love to all whom he met.

Finally, he found such a man caring for the poor and needy. He asked him if he would come and be the model for the face of Jesus. After sitting for a while, the young man asked Leonardo, “Don’t you recognize me?” Leonardo said that he knew few people in Milan and that, no, he didn’t know him. The young man answered, “A few months ago, you painted me as the face of Judas.”

Having heard the story of Jesus, the young man was transformed, changed – inside and outside – so much so that Leonardo didn’t even recognize him.

Do you see what can happen when we tell Jesus’ story in detail, with passion and conviction?

This Lenten season which we enter today, is a time of change, of choosing good over evil. In our gospel story today, we see Jesus wrestle with temptations – nothing obviously bad or wrong, if you think the ends justify the means – food, after 40 days of fasting; the power to change the world; an opportunity to test God’s love, demonstrating conclusively to everyone that Jesus is the Messiah. Nothing inherently bad or evil ... and yet ... Jesus knows that there can be no shortcuts to achieve the will of God. Somehow, he resists/turns away from the seductive suggestions that by putting himself first, he can accomplish in short order everything he’s been sent to do.

Even the Son of God doesn’t try to resist these temptations alone. The Spirit, which has led him into the wilderness, is with him. And during those 40 days, Jesus has been praying and fasting, waiting on God’s strength and guidance. Tempted in every way as we are, He drew strength from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Now, he calls us to follow him; to be his body; to be transformed by his presence, his sacrifice, his example, his love. He invites us to get to know him; to experience his grace and forgiveness; to know that we face nothing, not shame or remorse, not fear or doubts, not despair or darkness, not adventure or joy, not celebrations or revelations, not even the most subtle of all temptations alone. He urges us to know that while we can’t do it alone – this life, with its speed bumps and painful blips; temptations with their

attractive allure – while we can't do it alone, we don't have to. He is with us, within us, as close to us as the beating of our hearts. His Spirit waits to fill us, as the air we breathe fills our bodies.

Welcome to this Lenten journey – may you walk it in the presence of the Lord; listening for his word; trusting his healing power; falling in love with him all over again, as if for the first time. And may we all know what can happen in someone else's life if we tell the story of Jesus, with passion, conviction and in detail.