

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent • B  
Christ the King • February 28-March 1, 2009

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On Wednesday, we began again this journey of Lent. I invited us to be intentional about this holy Season, to enter the desert and break out of the normal, the ordinary, the routine. Otherwise this will be just another Lent.

This is a special time for our Catechumens and Candidates as they prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation. But it can also be a special time for each on of us to reclaim the vision and promise of our own Baptism.

Let me share a story from Ed Hays<sup>1</sup> that may help us enter this season, and see.

A young aspirant to holiness once came to visit the hermitage of an old holy man who was sitting in the doorway of his quarters at sunset. The old man's dog stretched out across the threshold as the young seeker presented his problem to the holy man. "Why is it, Abba, that some who seek God come to the desert and are zealous in prayer for only a time, while others, like you, remain faithful for a lifetime?"

The old man smiled and replied with this story:

"One day I was sitting here quietly in the sun with my dog. Suddenly a large white rabbit ran across in front of us. Well, my dog jumped up, barking loudly, and too off after that big rabbit. He chased the rabbit over the hills with a passion. Soon, other dogs joined him, attracted by his barking. What a sight it was, as the pack of dogs ran barking across the creeks, up stony embankments and through thickets and thorns! Gradually, however, one by one, the other dogs dropped out of the pursuit, discouraged by the course and frustrated by the chase. Only my dog continued to hotly pursue the white rabbit.

"In that story, young man, is the answer to your question."

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<sup>1</sup> Hays, Edward. *In Pursuit of the Great White Rabbit: Reflections on a Practical Spirituality*. Forest of Peace Books, Inc. Easton, KS. © 1990. Pp. 10-11.

The young man sat in confused silence. Finally, he said, “Abba, I don’t understand. What is the connection between the rabbit chase and the quest for holiness?”

“You fail to understand,” answered the hermit because you failed to ask the obvious question. Why didn’t the other dogs continue the chase? The answer to that question is that they had not seen the rabbit. You will lack the passion and determination necessary to perform all the hard work required by the discipline of your spiritual exercises.”

Okay, you may say, but what is the connection between Lent and the white rabbit. The first prerequisite for the spiritual journey is to see Christ. If we don’t have a **real experience** of the Divine Mystery in some way, we will lack the energy necessary to keep up the pursuit of holiness. Like the dogs in the story, we will drop out of the race if we only follow the saints and mystics who have seen Jesus. If we are only caught up in the enthusiasm of others, we will fail to be constant in our search. **Each one** of us must see Jesus!

Lent is an invitation to each one of us to see Jesus, to really encounter and experience his presence in our lives. But as with any invitation, we can respond with a “yes,” a “no,” or we set it aside and maybe get back to it later. The choice is ours.

So how do we accept this Lenten invitation? How do we slow down; how do we quiet down so that we can see God? Lent invites us to change our eating patterns, so that we can be in solidarity with those who are truly hungry. Lent invites us to deepen our prayer. Lent reminds us that all we have is from God and invites us to share our blessings.

So, some practical suggestions:

- Devote some extra time for prayer.
- Use the Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowls.
- Come to daily Mass here at CTK on Mondays and Thursdays at 12:10 or Wednesdays at 12:10 on Campus in the UC. Pray the Stations of Cross on Thursday at 6 or Fridays at 2:00 p.m.
- Make an effort to greet our catechumens (soon to be elect) and our candidates. Introduce yourself to someone you don’t know.

- Take time to review the Sunday readings before Mass, we provide the references in the bulletin or read them online from our website.
- There are more suggestions and resources in the Bulletin and our website.
- A final suggestion: Allow yourself to be quiet and open to God, starting with just a minute a day and gradually increasing the time.
- And don't give up if you forget, just keep trying.

This can be just another Lent, or we can re-enter the quest for holiness: to see Jesus, to really encounter and experience his presence in our lives. So, how will you respond?