

## HOMILY

### *The First Sunday of Lent* *February 21, 2010*

**Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski**  
St. John the Evangelist Parish  
Davison, Michigan

Have you noticed how on some signs the message which was intended isn't the one that comes across? Like the one in the department store which announced:

#### **Bargain Basement Is Upstairs!**

My favorite is actually a mistranslation. I'm pretty sure they meant *valuables* but the sign in the Italian hotel read:

*Please leave your **values** at the front desk*

Unfortunately, many people do that without being told. And sometimes we are tempted to leave our values somewhere else, too. Even Jesus faced that kind of temptation every day.

This morning we begin our Lenten journey with Jesus. We travel with him into the wilderness where he was tempted over and over again. One of the unique things about the temptations is that they are recorded in Matthew and Mark with equally much detail, which says to us that Jesus shared his struggle in the wilderness with the Disciples. He wanted both them and us to know that he faced the same temptations we face every day.

One of those areas of temptations is in the integrity department. It's a temptation we face every day. Every day you and I are tempted to make little decisions about what is right and wrong. It may be nothing more than borrowing a dozen paper clips or a ream of paper. It may be nothing more than running a red light because there isn't anyone around, or shaving a stroke off your golf game, or taking advantage of the waitperson's mistake when they give you back too much change. It's not the big things that get us in trouble right away. It's all the little things—the little steps that lead us away from living in the center of our core values.

Since this hits right at home, we can almost hear the words of Jesus to the tempter in the background: *"We do not live on bread alone. Worship God and serve only Him. Do not put God to the test."*

Sometimes the temptation is to do the right thing for the wrong reason. There's a fictional story about Jesus and the Disciples. It seems they were walking along a rocky road one day when Jesus asked each of them to pick up a stone and carry it for him. According to the story, John chose a large stone while Peter chose one that he could easily carry in his pocket. Jesus then led his Disciples to the top of the mountain where he continued to teach them. He ignored the stones until midday. Tired and hungry, one of the Disciples asked if there was anything to eat. Jesus told them to pick up the stones they had been carrying for him. Then he commanded the stones to become bread. Each Disciple was allowed to eat the bread he held in his hand. Much to his chagrin, Peter's portion of bread was barely a mouthful, so John shared some of his bread with Peter.

Later that same day, as they were headed down the mountain along the same stony path, Jesus told them to pick up and carry another stone for him. This time Peter picked up the largest stone he could find. He had trouble carrying it with one hand it was so big.

Jesus led the Disciples to a river. There he sat and taught them some more. Then Jesus did something strange. He told them to throw their stones into the water. They each did so, but nothing happened other than making big splashes. The Disciples were bewildered. Then Jesus asked them, "*For whom did you carry the stone?*"

Part of what we are about as disciples on the journey of faith together is carrying stones for Jesus. Sometimes those stones will be turned into bread to nourish and satisfy. Other times we will simply be called upon to be obedient or faithful and carry the stone because it is expected.

One of the questions of our faith and our faithfulness will always be, "For whom do you carry the stone?" Is it for you or is it for Jesus? It is important that we do the right thing. But it is equally important that we do the right thing for the right reason and purpose.

Finally, I think the worst temptation of all is to forget. We're tempted to forget that Jesus faced everything we face but did not give in. Because Jesus himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

We are called to remember, not to forget. We are called to remember that Jesus is on our side. He knows everything there is to know about us and still loves us. He came to help us become like him. He came to help us to be faithful and to succeed in being faithful. In the midst of temptation, we're called to remember that.

So what is tempting you right now? What temptation has your life and your faith in turmoil right now? Whatever it is, bring it with you when you come to the Lord's Supper. Bring it with you and give it to him. Approach his Throne of Grace with boldness in your time of need, because Jesus is able to help those who are being tested. Let go of that temptation. Give it to Jesus. Feed upon the grace of his presence, the strength of that grace. Come to the Lord and walk away lighter.

