

## REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST DAY OF LENT

*Matthew 7:21* For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

When I was ten years old I knew everything that was worth knowing about Lent. It was Easter vacation and it reminded me that the end of the school year was near! My intellectual capacity has obviously declined in the seventy years since then. Now, I know not early enough about Lent.

The Lenten season is a complex one. It starts with pancakes and ends with rabbits that hide eggs. There are also a few other bits between the pancakes and the easter eggs: Things like sin, redemption, death and resurrection. But, those things require thinking and we would really rather fill our easter baskets than our minds. It is so much easier that way!

But, if you have the inclination, here is a very brief agenda for thinking about Lent.

Sin has to be first on the agenda. As an old man I like to focus on the sins of the young “sex, drugs and rock and roll.” That is so much more interesting than the sins of my age group: Greed, lust for power and planetary destruction. If we put sin on the Lenten agenda, we should probably, although reluctantly, think first of our own sins. We might want to think about what those sins are and who we might be hurting with them. It might even be possible for us to give some prayerful consideration to the possibility of changing our sinful behavior.

Fortunately, that brings us to the second item on our Lenten agenda: Redemption. In spite of our sin, we are redeemable human beings. From a theological perspective Jesus redeemed us by his sacrifice on the cross. The cross: The physical symbol of our faith and the center-piece of Lent. We are made anew by Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross. That fact is worth a lot of contemplation during this season.

Our agenda continues with a reality that we often deny as long as possible: Death. Yet, the meaning of the Cross is lost unless we grapple with the reality of death. Whatever our age, we all are near death. We need to think about the practical, as well as the spiritual, as we march to death. Through meditation we may gain a sense of peace and completion as we contemplate our own demise.

Thank you God, that resurrection is also on the Lenten agenda. It is not just the hope of life after death that resurrection gives us, but the faith that we need to have in order to negotiate difficult times. Because of our resurrection inspired faith we are able to put into perspective the social and physical realities of the moment.

Well, there is our agenda for the next few weeks. In prayer, in meditation, in conversation, we are called to share with Jesus the triumph, the tragedy, the death and the rebirth that defines us as Christians. We will find our treasure as we contemplate our Lenten journey. Amen.