

## Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent – Eye Glasses

What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word, Lent?

Most people think about "Giving up something."  
Even if they don't actually *give up something*,  
that's what they think of  
when they hear the word Lent.

If I had my way, however, I would make everyone think,  
not of giving up something,  
but of *getting something*.

Specifically, I'd make them think of getting a new pair of glasses.

Let me tell you why.

Last week, I told you that I like country music.  
I didn't tell you that the kind of country music I like best is Texas Country  
(some people call it Red Dirt Country).

There's a Texas Country song by Shane Smith the Saints that goes like this:

*Storms running through the Midwest  
Like a bandit out on the loose.  
All the clouds are black as night fall.  
But all I see is you.*

*I make my way to the doctor one day  
When my eyes don't work like they should  
I'll read those letters from the large down to the small  
But all I see is you.*

*All I want to see... is you.*

Most of us know what it's like to read letters on an eye chart  
from the large down to the small...

And that experience is a lot better example  
of what Lent entails

than give giving up chocolate, beer or Facebook.

I'm not saying we don't need to give up things for Lent,  
but what I am saying that Lent is a lot like:

squinting your eyes  
and trying to make sense out of things  
that are *blurry, fuzzy and hard to read.*

Things like a school shooting in Florida where 17 young people  
with dreams in their hearts  
and lives of love service to live...  
are gunned down!

How do you make sense out of that?

Or what a young mother here in Borger this past week  
with a husband to love  
and children to raise  
dying in a housefire.

How do you read that kind of small print on the eye chart of life?

What about a teenage girl from our own parish  
whom I anointed at BSA just two days ago...  
a girl who should be running track  
and dancing at Quinceaneras...  
when suddenly, without reason and without warning,  
her legs no longer move!

(Her name is Kenya  
and her family asks that you pray for her.)

And pray for yourself,  
that God give you a new pair of glasses  
to help you read  
those confusing letters at the bottom of the chart.

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I bring this up because,  
In today's readings, there is a lot *squinting* taking place.

In today's passage from Genesis, for instance,  
we find Noah floating in the Ark out on the sea.

The whole world is flooded  
and all he can do is gaze at the horizon...  
how long did he squint at that hazy, faraway line between heaven and earth?

In today's Gospel,  
we encounter Jesus fasting in the desert.

All he can do is pray and sweat and hunger and thirst  
beneath the burning sun.  
How many hours, day after day,  
did he stare at the waves of heat floating on the horizon  
like the fingers of the devil  
coaxing him, coaxing him  
to give it all up  
and throw himself on the rocks?

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In the Catholic Church, we have something called Holy Days of Obligation.  
But Lent is more like a Holy Season of *Observation*.

Because, in this season of Lent, we strain our eyes  
to *somehow* see God

*somehow* present  
**somehow** at work  
in the "hard-to-read" places of life.

Days when the rain pour down  
and, like Noah, wonder how long we'll stay afloat;

Days when life is as dry as a desert  
and, like Jesus himself, our spirits cave-in like the walls of an empty stomach.

Endless days,  
sleepless nights  
when our spiritual vision is

blurred by pain  
distorted with confusion  
obscured by sin and despair.

Lent is an eye chart, my friends,  
and the more you squint  
the harder it is to read.

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Fortunately, our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
gave us a well-crafted lens  
to help us adjust our focus  
and read these harsh realities clearly...and correctly.

The lens has been around a long time.  
It's called the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Specifically, that part of the Mass  
in which *you and I*, together, drag our crosses  
into this church  
and place on this altar  
all the things that confuse us and trouble us and weigh u down:

that feeling we get when walk into a doctor's office  
to hear the results of a test,  
that desperation we sense when the boss calls us into the office  
and tells us to hit the road,  
the ache in the gut when we hear about a child being abused  
the anger that grips our throat  
when a good friend is being bullied trashed by her classmate  
when a good team is being benched by the coach  
when your dad blew a good chance for a good job  
because of his drinking.

Here at Mass, we bring to this altar not only our hopes and our dreams,  
and the hard work that accomplished this past week.  
But we also bring our suffering, our doubt and our pain...  
And we place them in the hands of Christ...

The One we call Savior of the world...

The Savior...who wept at the grave of his friend, Lazarus;  
the Savior who looked deeply into the eyes and soul  
of a mother whose child was dying  
the Savior who took into his arms a leper  
with open sores on his rotten skin.  
the Savior who clothed the naked body of a tormented man  
living among the tombs...  
the Savior who offered his back to the whip  
and opened his hands to the nails.

He did this...all of this...so we'd never forget  
that God Himself did not spare Himself  
the pain and agony  
of living a wounded life  
in a broken-down world.

And you and I and anyone brave to follow His way of life  
and join Him at His table,  
do so in order to unite our suffering with His.

When we do this,  
when we unite our suffering to the suffering of Christ  
it is then, only then,  
that our sight grows clear,  
and our focus turns sharp:

It is here that we receive a new set of eye glasses,  
It is here, in this season of Lent,  
we are all fitted with new contact lens  
and, finally, we begin to see...  
we begin to see  
that God is close...very close...  
so close...that we hear Him crying.

Crying **with us**, at the side of the hospital bed.  
Crying **with us** at the side of the open grave.

And He is begging...

begging us not to stop looking,

not to stop gazing at the horizon...

pass the place where three crosses stand on a hill...

pass the place where a man cries out in pain and bows his head...

and on to the place

where a tomb stands empty

and every tear is wiped away

and all is made new

and all is made right

and every fear and every doubt

is transformed into a faith,

that is strong and stout;

a place up ahead

where every hurt and every scar

is transformed into brilliance,

the brilliance of a star.