

Homily -1st Sunday Of Lent
February 21, 2021

I recently heard about a museum right here in Ann Arbor, Michigan called, “The Museum of Failed Products.” The museum looks like a standard supermarket inside. However, all of the items on the shelves are products that were taken off the market because nobody bought them. So let me tell you about a few of them and see if we can figure out why nobody bought them:

Clairol’s Touch of Yogurt Shampoo

Pepsi’s AM Breakfast Cola (that was supposed to compete with coffee)

Colgate brand TV Dinners

Fortune Snookies (fortune cookies for dogs)

Caffeinated Beer

Microwaveable Scrambled Eggs in a tube

Breath mints that look like little packages of cocaine

Can you imagine the disappointment of the inventor who poured his or her time, energy and intellect into creating a product only to have it fail? How would you feel if something you created ended up in “The Museum of Failed Products?”

Do you think God is ever disappointed with his creation? Do you think God is ever disappointed in us? I think God has a lot of days when he says: “I made you in my own image and likeness and look what you are doing. Maybe I went wrong when I gave you free will.” I think God was quite disappointed in all of humanity when he sent the flood. But among all of the people God created, he saw Noah, who was a good man. God wanted to save Noah, so he gave him instructions on

building an ark. God gave Noah the ark to save himself, his family and all of the creatures of the world. The ark is a sign of the new beginning God offered to the human race. I was looking at some paintings of the ark and noticed all of the people drowning in the water, and no one was swimming toward the ark. I guess they did not identify the ark as something that could save them. Lent is a time of new beginnings. When we feel as though we are drowning, God gave us many things that can save us. He gave us the Church, the Mass, Sacred Scripture, the Sacraments. We also have the three pillars of the season of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving. But most of all, God gave us himself. God may be very disappointed in us, but he made a covenant with Noah. He promised never to again destroy the creatures of the earth, and he gives us rainbows to serve as a reminder of that covenant. He has also given us the cross, the sign of the covenant that Jesus made with us. No matter how disappointed God is in us, he is also passionately in love with each of us. The ultimate reason for our hope is that we are unconditionally loved by God.

In the Gospel reading today, we hear how Jesus went into the desert for 40 days before he began his public ministry. Lent is a time for us to go into the desert for 40 days. We cannot do that literally, but we need to strip away all of the excesses, all of the rationalizations, all of the excuses, all of the procrastinations and look at how our lives are going. What do you need to let go of? Are you involved in sinful behavior that needs to stop? What do you need to change? What is preventing you from changing? What will help you grow spiritually? Sometimes we get so caught up in the activities of life that we do not stop and reflect upon what we are doing and why. We need to simplify our lives so that we can see what is really important. That is why our decorations in the Church are so simple

during Lent, to remind us to strip away all of the excess and examine what is really important. Lent is a time to let go of what is just not working in our lives. God may be really disappointed with us; we may be really disappointed in ourselves. But we have hope in Jesus who will always love us unconditionally. He gave us many things that can save us, the Church, the Mass, Sacred Scripture, the Sacraments. We also have the three pillars of the season of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Look to the cross, the sign of the covenant Jesus made with us. No matter how hopeless things may look, we will always have Jesus.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim