

## Homily for the First Sunday of Lent

In one story Daniel Webster toys with the idea. It is the basis for the plot of the musical “Damn Yankees”. Dorian Gray negotiated it through a painting and Faust has been made eternally famous through the deal that he struck. And what did all these people and plays have in common? Very simple: Faust and Dorian Gray, the lead character of “Damn Yankees” and Daniel Webster...they all sold their souls to the devil. For knowledge, for beauty for a winning season and for political gain...these characters did the unthinkable. They struck a deal with the devil and gave up their souls.

We would think them rather reckless. Would any of us sell our souls? Of course not. Who could be so foolish as to give up that part of themselves, that center, that heart of their lives which makes them who they are?

While the answer to the question seems obvious, I’m not so sure it is. I once saw a T-Shirt that read: “Lord, let me win the lottery so I can show you how generous I can be.” What would you be willing to do, if I could promise you a \$400 million jackpot from the lottery?

Health Clubs and Gyms have become a multi-billion dollar industry. Tell me. Would you sell your soul for a perfect body...better yet, for a perfect relationship?

How many people are involved in business and work hour upon hour, day upon day, week upon week. Sometimes their families hardly see them. Tell me. Would you sell your soul for success, for power, for prestige?

Everything in the readings today is about selling one's soul. Adam and Eve do it for knowledge and the promise that they will exceed God...they will become gods.

The devil in the gospel wants Christ to sell His soul. The devil offers Him power, possessions, prestige. Could Jesus not have been a greater influence on the world, if He possessed all those things? Wouldn't the poor have benefited more from a prestigious leader rather than an itinerant carpenter? So much to gain. Why not accept just a little of the offer?

All these questions greet us on this First Sunday of Lent. The readings today are trying to teach us that evil offers us nothing. Like the false advertisements that bombard our lives and promise us everything but give us nothing, evil tempts us with empty promises. What Adam and Eve failed to understand and what Christ is trying to teach us is that it is

only in God that we find true life. Only in God do we learn what love is really all about. And only in God do our hearts become vessels of care and compassion for others.

Lent is an invitation. It is an invitation to keep our eyes on Christ. It is an invitation to keep our eyes on Christ through prayer and fasting and generosity to others. We do this so that we might learn from Him that only in God do we find all that we are looking for and all that we yearn for. Without God everything else falls by the wayside.