Homily for 1st Lent 2016
February 14, 2016
Readings: Deut. 26:4-10, Ps. 91, Rom. 1:8-13, Lk. 4:1-13
Place: Alumni Chapel, 7pm
Theme: God loves you immeasurably. Respond to his love.
Mood: inviting.

Students, God loves you. This extent of love would be wonderful (arms and hands outstretched). But God’s love exceeds this; God’s love knows no bounds, no limits. And nobody loves you more than God does.

God created you in his image. He created you in an act of love, in cooperation with your parents. God created you “in his own image and likeness.” He created you in, by and for love. Love by its very nature has to express itself, to give itself, to be creative. And so God created you in his image so that you too might be most loving.

We are most happy when we are most loving as God intends us to express love. When we love in God’s ways we are happy because we act according to our nature. When we are loving and self-giving, we feel happy, integrated, whole. We feel as though we have life “together.” This happy feeling results when we act according to God’s ways.

But … we don’t always act according to God’s ways. Except for Jesus and Mary, who are sinless, each of us sins ... from time to time to time, each of us sins. I’m going to list the seven capital sins. See if you fail by any or many of these main sins: pride, ... anger, ... envy, ... greed, ... gluttony, ... lust, ... sloth. Anyone who has never sinned by any of these sins, please meet me after Mass at the entrance to chapel because I’d like immediately to submit your name for sainthood.

Why do we sin? ... Most basically, each of possesses an inclination to do evil, to tease ourselves with temptation in our minds and hearts, to choose what is wrong. God created us with the wonderful gift of free will, and sooner or later, each of us mis-uses that gift. Each of us suffers some degree of imperfectinio our minds, hearts and will.

I think most people sin due to human weakness. We experience some gap in our lives; we proclaim that only God can fill that gap. At times, however, we try to fill that gap with something that philosophically can’t fill us. Sooner or later, we seek not God’s will, but our individual will. We seek to satisfy our desires rather than what God desires for us. Sin is defined as self-seeking, selfishness.

Resulting from sin is not happiness but sadness, not self-giving but self-seeking, not a sense of wholeness but of brokenness.

Notice in today’s gospel how Jesus dealt with temptation. He prayed and fasted. He did this for forty days. The Church’s season of Lent lasts 40 days. During this season, we are called individually and collectively to fast and pray. Regarding fasting during Lent, collectively Catholics throughout the world,
unless health or age issues excuse them, are asked to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, i.e., to eat just one full meal; and to abstain from meat during the six Fridays in Lent. Besides that, is there some other individual fasting of non-food behaviors that you might do? ...

Prayer. The Church, basing itself on the Scriptures and Tradition, calls every Christian to worship God weekly as we Catholics do at Sunday Mass. Could you try to pray sometimes in addition to that? We have Mass daily in the chapel at 12:15 noon. Could you attend daily Mass for twenty minutes one day per week? We have adoration each First Friday, and Taize prayer each month, and confessions three times weekly. Prayer is an opportunity to open our hearts to God, to speak our minds, and to listen peacefully for God to touch our hearts or to inspire our minds, to strengthen our wills.

When we do good, we feel good. When we do bad, we feel bad. That is how God created us. When we act in accordance with God’s image within us, we feel whole, integrated, happy. Let’s focus on sensing and developing the image of God within ourselves by focusing on Jesus and how he faced and dealt with temptation: by prayer and fasting. We follow Jesus because nobody loves us more than God does.