

First Sunday of Lent February 26, 2012 Year B
Mark 1 12-15

Starting from Scratch

How many times have you heard that expression? Starting from scratch.

To start from scratch is to begin from the beginning, from square one. It's to start with nothing, no odds in your favor, no head start or advantage. Start over, forget about the past, move forward.

Many of us use this phrase and understand perfectly what it means, although few of us know its origin.

In the middle of the 18th century, ***starting from scratch*** was a racing term. It referred to a starting line. A starting line, usually scratched into the dirt with a sharp stick.

Today, starting from scratch or made from scratch has come reflect a good thing. In baking and cooking, made from scratch is generally presumed that the product will be excellent.

So, on this first Sunday of Lent we are looking at an opportunity to start from scratch and produced something excellent in our spiritual lives.

The ashes we received on Ash Wednesday reminded us of our beginnings. From nothing, God created the universe.

And He created human beings from the simple clay of the earth. Made from scratch. And He called it “**very good.**” Excellent for sure.

The ashes also remind us that, in the end, we all will return to the earth from which we came.

However, in the meantime, because of our weakened condition from the effects of original sin, we strive and struggle to live up to that title of being “**very good.**”

We sin. We forget what really matters.

We get our priorities out of whack. And we loose sight of the ultimate goal. The prize of the race. Heaven.

But, the Good News is that we have a very loving and merciful God.

When we falter and stumble, and sometimes even fall down, our Lord provides us with an opportunity to return to the starting line.

Start over forget about the past. Move forward to reaching the goal. The result, with His help can be excellent.

We only need to say yes Lord.

I do want to start from scratch. I do want to repent and believe. I do want a new beginning.

A new beginning is what the 40 days of Lent are about.

The number 40 for the people of Israel signified something **new and good**.

The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert before they had a **new** beginning in the Promised Land.

They also believed that the time from conception to birth was 40 weeks. The result being new life.

Of course, Jesus spent 40 days and nights in the desert fasting and praying before beginning His public ministry. A **new** message of God's love for us.

And it was 40 days from the time of His Resurrection until His glorious Ascension into heaven. The result, a **new** Jerusalem.

So let us use these next 40 days to start from scratch.

Start with the basics.

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and most importantly, positive acts of charity to others.

Confess and forget about the past. Move forward to something new in our lives.

A **new**, closer, and deeper relationship with God.

And, you know what is so great about starting from scratch in our spiritual life?

We don't have to do it alone. Jesus is there to help us. He is there to help us put the proper ingredients in place.

Jesus is calling out to us in the Gospel to repent, re-shape, re-think.

And if we have this image of Him hanging over us as a judge, waving His finger at us, then this idea of something new in our lives is utterly beyond us alone.

But that is not who Jesus is. He stands at our side and says, "You can do it because I will help you.

It won't be easy.

It will not happen overnight.

But it will happen.

We will do it together one ingredient at a time."

No matter what our age or quality of spiritual life, He is saying "Start from scratch with Me."

And His promise is that, like starting from scratch in baking and cooking, the result will be excellent.