

Archbishop Smith: Super Tuesday!

We have our own this year in the Archdiocese of Edmonton. While on March 3rd our friends south of the 49th parallel will gather in many places for a large number of electoral primaries, the people of the Archdiocese will have the opportunity to come together in many churches for the Sacrament of Penance. It is our annual Day of Confessions, and the fact that the Tuesday on which it falls will see every priest available for the sacrament, and multitudes coming together to be forgiven, renders it truly "super". After all, what can surpass the joy of being forgiven by God, and thus reconciled to Him and to one another?

The caucuses and primaries of the American electoral process aim at choosing from among various candidates who will be the party's nominee to run for the Office of President. Which of the candidates is the most qualified? On our "Super Tuesday," we shall gather in the awareness that we have already been made, by the will and choice of God, candidates not for an elected office but for a life of holiness. We should be under no illusions about our qualifications for this. We are, in fact, supremely unqualified, sinners that we are. God calls us to holiness, He desires that we be saints, and we become so not by our own merits but solely by the pure gift of his infinite mercy. That's why we need the Sacrament of Penance, left by Christ to his Church precisely so that we might know the joy of his forgiveness, which heals our iniquities and sets us back on the road to sainthood.

As the candidates in the U.S. vie for the votes of the people, they lay out their respective visions for the country and its future. Differences among them are sometimes quite marked, which can leave voters wondering which is truly best. For the Christian life of holiness, there is but one vision that matters, namely, that of Jesus Christ. Not only does he spell out the way of sanctity that leads to eternal life, but also he is the Way. Nevertheless, our lives can easily diverge from his teaching, and we soon find ourselves again in need of his mercy.

Why this is so is given to us in the Gospel passage we heard proclaimed on Sunday (Matthew 4:1-11). The temptations with which Jesus was afflicted in the desert by the Evil One also beset us: to follow our own self-will rather than obey the will of God; to allow trust in God to die and replace it with confidence in ourselves; and to bow down in worship not to God but to the idols of our own making – money, power, ideologies and so on. These temptations beset us constantly. Their aim is to seduce us into accepting the illusion that we do not need God, and to trick us into thinking that God, far from being a loving Father on whom we can peacefully rely, is instead an opposing candidate against whom we must contend.

Jesus resisted the devil and sent him packing. He was not to be swayed from his

obedience to the Father. Through union with Christ we are given a share in his fidelity and are thus able to participate in his power over evil. We simply cannot do this without him. So, off to the confessional it is, whether on our Archdiocesan "Super Tuesday" or any other day. There we speak the truth of our lack of qualification, so that, by receiving the gift of God's love, mercy and forgiveness, we become by grace qualified candidates for a life of holiness and peace.