

HEROIC VIRTUE

Living the Call to Perfection



Lent

40 DAYS OF RENEWAL

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Blessed

Lent

Prayer During Lent

Last time we talked about prayer during the Advent and Christmas season. This time we will look at prayer during the Lenten Season.

This season is a little more difficult. During Advent, we were only preparing for one season, Christmas. Everything was about one event, the birth of the Savior and all the fun and exciting events that go with it. There were two sad points that went with the joy of Christmas and that was the feast of Holy Innocents and the Flight to Egypt. But these were just small little side steps from the overall joy of Christmas.

With Lent, we have to prepare for two major feasts that take us to polar ends of the spiritual and emotional spectrum. We are expected to prepare and meditate on both death and life, crucifixion and resurrection, sin and forgiveness, and Hell and Heaven.

Because Lent is a penitential season, it seems as if we are preparing for the crucifixion and death of our Lord because we have sinned. We are to reflect and come to a deeper understanding that it is all our fault and we are horrible and despicable people and thank goodness God loves us so much that He was willing to pay the debt of our sins for us. We should be ashamed of the meager penance that we do during Lent as if that covers the multitude of our sins.

We are expected to switch gears from 6 weeks of this penitential mode to resurrection, life, love and forgiveness in 3 days. Not easy!!! Talking about grinding to a halt and throwing it in reverse? Wow!

Fortunately, there need not be this deep and wide of a chasm between the two feasts of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The two are intrinsically tied together. When Jesus reveals His plan to the disciples, He mentions both together. The Son of Man will be scourged and crucified and die, BUT on the third day He will rise

Q&A

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Embracing Truth

Q: What is a Rule of Life

A: Perhaps you have heard of the Benedictine Rule or the Franciscan Rule or some other. A Rule of Life is a list of rules or instructions on how one is to live their life as a member of the religious. With that, the Benedictine Rule is a list of instructions on how a Benedictine is to live their life as a religious monk. The Franciscan Rule is a list of instructions on how a Franciscan is to live his life as a friar.

When one enters an order, they are asking to live a life according to that order's Rules. They do not get to come in and do whatever they want. They live a communal life and so one must be willing to conform unto that order's Rules.

As a Diocesan Hermit, it is a bit different. There is no Rule of Life set for one to simply enter into. Each Hermit must write his own Rule which must be approved by the Diocesan Bishop who will consecrate them a hermit.

Once a rule is approved by the Bishop and the person is consecrated a hermit, they are obligated to live it for the rest of their life the same as a Benedictine or Franciscan is obliged to live their Rule for the rest of their lives.

The idea of drafting a set of Rules to Live by for the rest of your life is a very scary task indeed. It is not to be taken lightly and should only be done according to the direction of the Holy Spirit, and under the council of a spiritual director and your bishop.

In general, though, it would be good for everyone to have basic rules or principals to live by - In that sense we can all be like Jethro Gibbs. Then again we are - we all have the 10 commandments to live by.

Submit your questions to: fr@getholy.com

again. He does not just speak of the horror of His death, BUT also the glory of His resurrection. He undergoes the first that He may achieve the second.

We notice further that as He revealed His plan it did not sound like this. Yea, because you bunch of jerks, sinning and betraying me all the time, I guess I am going to have to be the bigger man and pay the price for your sorry butts. You probably will not even appreciate it and keep on sinning. BUT - No, no, no, that is OK, I can take it. It's going to take me three days, but I will get the job done.

We heard none of this we are despicable people language. Rather, we hear constantly that He loves us and cares for us deeply. All He wants is what He said to His Father, that we may share in the Joy of the Trinity and that our happiness may be complete.

With this in mind, we must look at the two events as one. It is all the single act of Salvation. It is the act of Jesus being victorious over sin and death, by which He is able to bring us life.

With this in mind, we need not see this penitential season as drudgery for our sins, but an act of participating in the Salvation that Christ won for us. This is actually to be the case with all our sufferings in life. All our sufferings, whether they be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, persecutions, humiliations, failures, weaknesses, temptations, or the difficulties and inconveniences of life, we are to unite them to the Cross with Christ. By this act, we get to share, by doing our little part, in the victory over sin and death.

The Holy Cross is not shame. It is not failure. Nor is it weakness. It is glorious and magnificent, full of honor and glory. It is beautiful and a picture of the strength of love. It is the greatest victory ever achieved in any battle ever fought. AND WE GET TO BE PART OF IT!!! YEA GOD!!!

Being in the trenches is never a beautiful thing, neither is being in the state of sin. During the season of Lent, we remember that with

great valor, we are renewed in spirit to fight to the good fight and to finish the race, so that we will receive the crown that will never fade away on that glorious Easter morning.

Our prayer is focused on the full event of our salvation. Lent is a joyful season as we meditate on what it means in our life. God so loved the world (people) that He sent His only Son to fulfill what Abraham was asked to do to Issac. He sacrificed His Son in atonement for the sins of the world (people).

A good examination of conscience is a good thing during Lent. An examination of conscience should include both a reflection on our weaknesses that lead us to sins, and on our virtues and successes over sin. But during Lent, I recommend a deeper reflection on our weaknesses and sins that need to be crucified with Christ on the Cross. Let them die with Him through the forgiveness that He offers in the sacrament of confession.

This is called our Easter Duty, to go to confession once a year, in particular during Lent. Why is it not then called our Lenten Duty? Because Lent culminates in Easter. In confession, we place ourselves on the Cross, humiliating as confession is. We confess to God that we are dead and that there is no life within us. We leave confession, like Christ, resurrected, rising from the tomb. (Ever wonder why confession is celebrated in a box? The box represents the tomb.) Every confession is a mini Easter. Confession is about Easter. It is about, resurrection and new life in Christ. Hence it is our Easter Duty because we want to be in the resurrected state on Easter morning. To do this, in preparation for this, we go to confession during Lent. Then on Easter morning we can truly say that we are an Easter People.

Nothing can be worse than to realize on Easter, that we are still dead to God. So pray, do penance and get to confession during Lent that the victory and joy of Easter may be yours.

Work - A Four Letter Word?

Work is a naughty word in our society today. Work is something you try to get out of and only do if you have to. We only do the minimum to get our paycheck. And as soon as people can retire, they are out of there so fast it makes your head spin.

Now this is not true for everyone, but the general spirit of it is true for most. We understand that many do not have the ideal job that they would want and that there are not enough multi-million dollar jobs to go around for everyone. Work is difficult for most. I agree. The grueling tasks that need to be done to keep society functioning are not fun, nor do most of them pay what they are worth.

We might say something like this, not to degrade any work for it is all valuable, but I have to pick on at least one job in order to make my point. We might say, "You can not pay me enough to stand there and flip hamburgers all day." That may be true, but can you be paid enough to feed your family, put a roof over their head and clothing on their backs?

In order for society to work, we need burgers to be flipped. We need a lot of things, including nuts to be put on to bolts. Not exciting. This is part of our problem in our "entertain me" society. Sports, movies, TV shows, night clubs, putt putt golf... all to keep us entertained. Teachers find it difficult to teach because now they have to be an entertaining teacher rather than a teacher. We expect our jobs to be entertaining and fun also. Problem is they call it work for a reason. If work were fun, they would have called it fun. But as it is we call it work.

There are some who are fortunate enough that they find their job actually fun. Unfortunately, that is the exception and not the rule.

I offer us a challenge as I write this part of my newsletter on Labora. Rather than seeing work as something I have to do, or something

I do to get a paycheck, or whatever other negative view we have about work, let us see it differently. Let us see work as glorifying God. Rather than saying, "Oh God, I hate this putting a nut on a bolt job," let us say, "Oh God, I put this nut on this bolt for love of you." How can putting a nut on a bolt be an act of love? Because God asks you to put that nut on that bolt, by doing it you are pleasing Him.

I had a meeting with my bishop the other day to talk about how things are going as I progress to becoming a hermit. I had to admit one of my trials. I get enmeshed in my work and then my alarm goes off telling me it is time to pray. It has surprised me how difficult it has been to simply stop, lay the tools down and pray. I find that I will say that I will finish this first and then pray.

I do this with the understanding that God wants this work to be done and that it needs to be done. Doing the manual labor glorifies God and participates in the building up of His Kingdom on earth. The work is part of my prayer. Though this is true, there is still a hierarchy of prayer and I am to stop, lay my tools down and pray. That is my "job" as a priest and as a hermit. I am getting better.

I know as I say this you might be saying that I choose to work. As a priest, I do not have to shovel #%^#\$\$% (muck the stalls to be polite about it). My hands are anointed for the purpose of the Eucharist and to bless you. But I choose to get them dirty as a way to teach the dignity and beauty of work. As holy as my hands are, the dirtiest of work is not beneath them.

We all have duties in life. One of them is to take care of ourselves to the best of our ability and another is to be a productive member of society. We put these two together and nuts find themselves on bolts and you are able to feed your family.

That is to say. You contributed your part to the good of society who needed that nut on that bolt and you got paid for it (Maybe not as much as you would have liked) and you were able to feed your family. Work is not a bad word - good things come from it.

We are still getting started.

Great News - We almost have the barn extension finished. Unfortunately, it got too cold to do the concrete work. We will finish this in the spring.

I am still looking at the major house rebuild this spring. I have had the joy of going through all my possessions and ask - is it a need, a want or is it clutter. As a result, there will be a garage sale in my future. Down sizing so that I will be able to live in the much smaller space has been an interesting task. You do not realize how much you are holding on to the world, memories and false hopes until you really try to down size. It has been an act of prayer in itself saying, "All I need is found in you my Lord."

I am still looking for someone to buy the manufactured house and get it out of my way so I can build in the walkout basement. This will leave me with about 1/3 of the living space that I have now. A much more modest space for a hermit to find solitude in.

If you know someone who needs a 60'x26' manufactured home with a new kitchen, new siding, new windows and a new roof, please have them contact me. I have put a lot of work and money into it, but no matter what I do, it is just still too big for a hermit to live in. It should make a nice home for somebody.

I am also looking at a garden this spring - Hmmmm, we will see. May be better to leave this to next year.