

Homily: 9th Sunday: Cycle C: 2022: Sir 27: 4-7; Ps 92: 1 Cor 15: 54-58; Lk 6: 39-45

“A Golden Opportunity to Grow in Holiness: Lent 2022”

1. **We all know very well how hard it is to consistently choose what is good.** Because of sin all of us to some extent have *darkened minds, weakened wills and hardened hearts*. At times this is discouraging and we may think to ourselves: ***why does it have to be so hard, Lord?*** But then we hopefully realize that God is with us in our struggles to grow in holiness and that He uses all the trials and tribulations of this life on a daily basis to mature us in character and to refine our being to reflect Jesus more and more – if we more generously and consciously unite ourselves with Jesus in our sufferings on a daily basis, as an act of reparation and love for souls. He wants to enlighten our minds with His Truth, to strengthen our wills to consistently choose what is good and to soften our hearts with the gift of charity and patience with ourselves, with other people, and in a personal relationship with God Himself, the Father Son and Holy Spirit in the depths of our soul.

2. **We are called to die with Christ, so that we can truly rise with Him.** Transformation in Christ - that is what our Christian discipleship is to bring about in the Lord’s time and grace guided by the Holy Spirit. **As we live, so also we shall die.** St. Paul is reminding us of that reality in the 2nd reading today. If we stay rooted in the Lord and our Catholic faith, *death is swallowed up in victory.* “*Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Remember if one does not want to spend time with God now, why all of a sudden will that happen when we die? It won’t. Don’t put off your conversion - that is what the upcoming season of Lent is to remind us of. Even for those of us who practice the Catholic faith on a regular basis, we all have room to grow in holiness – if we are honest with ourselves and have the gift of humble self-knowledge, of both our strengths and weaknesses – which we should always pray for on a daily basis.

3. **Lent is meant to be a preparation for a holy death someday.** As we get ready for Lent we should ask ourselves honestly: what are the things that are preventing me from being a better Catholic? *Am I not taking enough time to pray every day?* If so, make it part of your Lenten practice to spend extra time in prayer, esp. in the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet. The best prayer of course in the Holy Mass. If you are retired and still able to

drive, what is preventing you from coming to **weekday Mass**, at least one extra day a week? As people who come to weekday Mass will tell you, you only see the benefits of it and appreciate the special graces you receive -if you actually make the sacrifice to come to Mass. In light of eternity you will never regret that time commitment to daily Mass. To grow in our Catholic faith, we also need to be studying it and learning more about it:

EWTN is a gift from God on the TV to help us do that - pick up a new Lenten program guide on the back radiators. Good spiritual reading is also essential to grow in our faith by further knowledge and reflection – we of course have a great **Lending library** in the Church back/basement to help with that – borrow a good book for Lent – esp. if you don't like to read, what a beautiful penance to offer to the Lord in love this Lent. Are we struggling with life, with people, with our own weakness and sinfulness? When is the last time we made a very good thorough **Confession** in the Sacrament? Lent is the time to do it, and if we have children and grandchildren when is the last time we brought them to Confession? We have many opportunities in Lent to tap into those special graces of healing and forgiveness that only come through that special sacrament of Confession. Do we appreciate that our Lord Jesus makes Himself truly present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Blessed Sacrament? When is the last time we came **to a time of Adoration** to show our appreciation to the Lord Jesus for doing that for us? Have we ever come to a **Holy Hour/Benediction**? Of course we have one **every Friday at 3 pm – the great Hour of Divine Mercy** – since Jesus died on the Cross at the 3 o' clock hour on Good Friday. Come and see what a gift that Holy Hour is and there is also an opportunity to go to Confession after the Holy Hour. Finally every Friday during Lent we do **the beautiful Divine Mercy Stations of the Cross** at 6:30 pm. Do we daily try to relate our pains and sufferings of this life with Jesus in His Holy Passion? He went through the most horrible suffering and death imaginable, so we could be set free from sin and death. Come to the Stations with your family and ponder that great gift of the Lord. Yes, Lent is meant to remind us all that someday we all are going to die, but viewing it in Christian hope it is not a cause for despair, but instead a final opportunity to unite ourselves with Jesus in this earthly life, so we can be with Him forever, in His kingdom where there will be no more sorrow, pain, or suffering. Let's pray we all have a blessed Lent which is a foreshadowing of death, leading to the Resurrection in Jesus. God bless you.