

“Lent as an annual Spiritual Visitation by the Lord”

1. Are we willing to be directed by the Lord like Abram was at the age of 75?

God intervened in his life, and Abram responded fully, despite older age. It was a ***“moment of visitation”*** as the saints call it. Do we recognize the moment(s) of visitation, by the Lord, in our life? It can come through happy, joyous events, but it often comes through the mystery of the Cross: difficulties, humiliations, death, illness, loss of friendship, a dating breakup, struggling in marriage, tension with children, struggles at work, etc. God doesn’t cause all these things, but He does permit them and if we allow Him to work it can be for the greater good of our soul. Why? Because when we come up against obstacles in life, it should make us realize that we really are not in control of everything and we need to cast our self into the loving embrace of the Blessed Trinity, in total **TRUST**. Our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving call us to that trust. These practices are not an end in of themselves, but rather are the means to make **reparation** to God and neighbor for the spiritual damage our sins have caused to them and us, and to draw us into deeper union with the Triune God.

2. St. Paul asks us the essential question in the 2nd reading: are we willing to bear our share of the hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God? Or have we settled into a life of spiritual complacency? Do we go along to get along in life? Are we willing to stick our neck out for the Lord and our Catholic faith? If we truly listen to the voice of Jesus as the Father asks us to do today in the Gospel, that means we will bear some hardship, sometimes serious hardship. **Why? *Because Jesus’s way, as made known to us in the authentic teaching of the Catholic Faith, is not the way of the world! It is a call to die to self, to radically love others in a life of sacrificial service, and to let Christ live in the thoughts of our minds and hearts and to be shown in our real nitty-gritty choices in life.* A true follower of Christ is not a coward, but a real man or woman or child of courage who is willing to go against the current of the world, to be counter-cultural: to help the Lord in the mission of saving souls.**

3. Last week we heard about the reality of the devil in both the reading from **Genesis** about the fall of mankind, and then in the **Gospel** concerning the temptations of Jesus. **Well, the question is: *how does the devil try to get most of us? Gradually.*** He is very patient, in an evil way; knowing that most of us will not choose evil directly. He tries to get us to turn away from God in degrees, with temptations such as: *you don't need to pray every day - you're very busy; you don't need to go to Confession much, if at all - and if do go, don't examine your conscience too deeply, rush in and rush out, and you don't need to tell that priest EVERYTHING, especially the embarrassing stuff (e.g., sexual sins);* of course if you hide any serious sins the whole Confession is invalid - he doesn't remind us of that! He tries to trick us into thinking *that it is not a big deal if we miss Sunday or Holy day Mass occasionally: if we were on vacation, or tired from work, or because we were out late the night before, or the kids had sports.* The bottom line is the devil tries to get us to be **spiritually flabby**, and our human nature already has a tendency to go that route because of the lingering effects of original sin. He tries to convince us that **our spiritual life is no big deal**: that God loves us no matter what we do and that we don't really have to make a strong effort to become holy. It is a **BIG LIE!** Yes, God loves us, but because He loves us, He wants us to share in His Life; and that can only happen if we are willing to turn away from sin! If we don't make a strong effort to turn away from sin, the result is we spin our wheels spiritually year after year and make little or no spiritual progress; and when we die, we can only hope by God's mercy to make it into **Purgatory** - maybe barely at that! The Lord wants better for us. He gives us the mystery of the **Transfiguration** today to prepare us for the difficulty of the **Cross(s)** of life. *But it is worth it, for if we embrace our Crosses with love, unite them with Jesus, and live daily a life of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, the Holy Spirit will transform us over time in holiness and we will be drawn into the eternal communion of the Father, Son, and Spirit even now, leading some day to the fullness of life in Heaven - of which the mystery of the Transfiguration points to.* God bless you.