

FROM THE PASTOR
March 26, 2023
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
FIRST SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

Be a Faithful and Courageous Witness

HOLY LENT

For our meditation of today I would like to continue to set before us the grace filled season of lent which began on Ash Wednesday, March 4th.

The holy Season of Lent (Old English for *spring*) bids us to train and get into shape for spiritual combat. During this time, we deny ourselves (or at least curtail) sensory pleasures and self-indulgence; increase our quality/quantity of prayer; and devote more time to good works and charity... all so that we may unite ourselves more closely to the Cross of Christ and have His strength to fight off the tempter – the ancient foe – who seeks to lure us away from God and eternal Life with Him.

In his commentary on Psalm 118, Bishop, and Doctor of the Church St. Ambrose of Milan (340 - 397 A.D.) wrote about the daily battles of the Christian and how the strength of our blessed Lord helps us to daily conquer the devil:

As there are many kinds of persecution, so there are many kinds of martyrdom. Every day you are a witness to Christ. You were tempted by the spirit of fornication but feared the coming judgment of Christ and did not want your purity of mind and body to be defiled: you are a martyr for Christ. You were tempted by the spirit of avarice to seize the property of a child and violate the rights of a defenseless widow but remembered God's law and saw your duty to give help, not act unjustly: you are a witness to Christ. Christ wants witness like this to stand ready, as Scripture says: Do justice for the orphan and defend the widow. You were tempted by the spirit of pride but saw the poor and the needy and looked with loving compassion on them and loved humility rather than arrogance: you are a witness to Christ. What is more, your witness was not in word only but also in deed.

Who can give greater witness than one who acknowledges that the Lord Jesus has come in the flesh and keeps the commandments of the Gospel? One who hears but does not act, denies Christ. Even if he acknowledges Him by his words, he denies Him by his deeds. How many will say to Christ: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy and cast out devils and work many miracles, all in Your Name? On that day He will say to them: Depart from me, all you evildoers. The true witness is one who bears witness to the commandments of the Lord Jesus and supports that witness by deeds.

How many hidden martyrs there are, bearing witness to Christ each day and acknowledging Jesus as the Lord! The Apostle knew this kind of martyrdom, this faithful

witness to Christ. This is our boast, he said, the witness of our conscience. How many have borne witness in public but denied it in private! Do not believe every spirit, he said, but know from their fruits whom you should believe. Be faithful and courageous when you are persecuted within, so that you may win approval when you are persecuted in public. Even in those unseen persecutions there are kings and governors, judges with terrible power. You have an example in the temptation endured by the Lord.

In another place we read: Do not let sin be a king in your mortal body. You see the kings before whom you are made to stand, those who sit in judgment over sinners, where sin is in control. There are as many kings as there are sins and vices; it is before these kings we are led and before these we stand. These kings have their thrones in many hearts. But if anyone acknowledges Christ, he immediately makes a prisoner of this kind of king, and casts him down from the throne of his own heart. How shall the devil maintain his throne in one who builds a throne for Christ in his heart?

LENTEN REMINDERS

During Lent we have the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament on each Friday at 7.00pm. Please make every effort to walk with Our Lord as he carried the Cross. On Friday March 31st, the Stations of the Cross will be preceded by our Bread and Soup Supper at 6.00PM in the Lower Hall. This supper is prepared by our Knights and Squires. We ask that what a family may have saved on their evening meal be donated to the Food Pantry. One may write a check to St. Paul the Apostle and write "Food Pantry" in the memo section.

Please see the Bulletin for the Holy Week Schedule, and please note that on Easter Sunday there will be three Masses: 8.00AM, 9.30AM, and 11.00AM.

Please make a Holy Lent and try to instill into your children the importance of doing penance. How pleased is Our Lord when the little ones give up candy or cookies for love of Him.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda