

2nd Sunday of Lent – February 17, 2008

LESSON: We Cannot Do It Alone

What God is asking of each one of us is **completely** beyond our capacities, if we depend on **ourselves** more than on **God**. We cannot become what we are **called** to become - courageous, wise, self-controlled, and just, **ambassadors** of Christ's truth, joy, and lasting peace - by our **own** strength. It's too much for us.

- ✍ When God first called Abraham, he didn't say, "Go and conquer the Promised Land and **make yourself** into a great nation that will be a blessing for the whole world."
- ✍ Instead, God called Abraham and said, "**I will make** of you a great nation... **I will make** your name great... **I will bless** those who bless you."
- ✍ **God** alone enables us to become what he created us to be.
- ✍ God is the **mastermind**; we are his **assistants**.

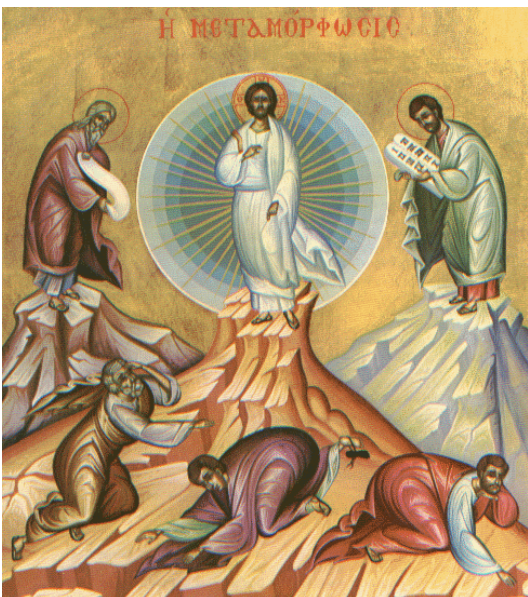


This doesn't mean that Christians are supposed to be **passive**. We have to **choose** to be **faithful** to our Lord, and that means **effort** - constant, even painful effort. But our effort will be **useless** unless it is **rooted** in God.

This is why St Paul tells Timothy to "bear your share of hardship for the gospel **with the strength that comes from God**."

The meaning and happiness we **long** for, the lasting achievements we **yearn** for - we can have it all, if we depend **more on God** than on ourselves.

ILLUSTRATION: Jesus Strengthened His Apostles



The Gospel says that Jesus took Peter, James, and John and "**led them up** a high mountain."

- ✍ In the Bible, whenever there is a mountaintop, pay attention! **Mountaintops** are places to **encounter** God, to have a life-changing **experience** of God.
- ✍ By saying that **Jesus** "**led them up** a high mountain," St Matthew is pointing out that we cannot **concoct** experiences of God all by **ourselves**.
- ✍ Peter, James, and John couldn't have caused the transfiguration by their own power.
- ✍ We need someone **to come down to us** from the heights and **connect** us with that higher purpose.

- ✍ And the **only one** who has done that is **Jesus Christ**.
- ✍ That's why God the Father says, "**This** is my beloved Son... Listen to **Him**."

Christ is our Savior. **We** are not our own Savior. We need to **follow** where he leads, to **listen** to him.

APPLICATION: Almsgiving Opens Our Hearts to Others and to God

An excellent way to learn how to **depend more on God** and less on **ourselves** is through practicing one of the **three main activities** the Church asks of us during Lent: **almsgiving**.



- ✍ The **first** activity, **prayer**, directs our hearts and minds to **God**.
- ✍ The **second**, **fasting**, directs our attention to **ourselves**, to **keeping our ship in order** so that it can sail well and withstand the storms of temptation and tragedy.
- ✍ The **third**, **almsgiving**, directs our attention **towards those around us** who have needs.

The most obvious needs are the **physical** ones - food, shelter, and clothing. But almsgiving also extends to **other** needs.

- ✍ Those around us need to **learn about Christ** and experience his **forgiveness**.
- ✍ They need to be **comforted** and **encouraged** in their sorrows, sufferings, and temptations.

If we have all the material goods we **need**, but habitually fail to **share** with those who don't, it is a sign that we have become too **self-centered**.



If we fail to share the **hope** and **faith** we have received from Christ, which he constantly **replenishes** through sacraments and the Holy Spirit, it is a sign that we have become too **self-satisfied**.

But when we are **generous**, giving of ourselves for the benefit of others, **our** hearts in turn become **more open to receive** the grace, comfort, and strength that God wants to give **us**, and that we **need** so desperately.

This is why Jesus tells us in the Gospels, "**Give**, and it **shall be given** to you" (Luke 6:36).

Every week, we do this as a parish when we “give away” 10% of our weekly collection to some other charity. Here are the organizations in just the past month, that our parish has helped::

- ✍ The St. Vincent DePaul Society – who helps the poor of our own area with the basic necessities of life
- ✍ The Poor Missions of the US – aiding the missions in our own country which support the poor and minorities
- ✍ The Society for the Propagation of the Faith – which brings to faith to every part of the world through missionary priests, sisters and brothers
- ✍ The communications office of the Diocese – which helps spread the Message of the Gospel in print, on TV and the airways.



Today, we are given yet another opportunity and way to be mindful of the needs of others over our own as we take part today in the Bishop’s Annual Lenten Appeal. Today’s Lenten Appeal helps the diocese with:



- ✍ Pro-life activities and promotions
- ✍ Ministry to Hispanics, Vietnamese and Black Catholics
- ✍ Foster Care and Adoption
- ✍ Shelters for battered women
- ✍ Ministry to our college students on the campuses of state universities
- ✍ A home for pregnant mothers
- ✍ Plus all the activities and offices of the diocese which help our parishes operate and function

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Pope Benedict reminded us this year, in his Message for Lent, that “...every time when, for love of God, we share our goods with our neighbor in need, we discover that the fullness of life comes from love and all is returned to us as a blessing in the form of peace, inner satisfaction and joy. Our Father in heaven rewards our almsgiving with His joy” (Message for Lent, 2008, #4).



We all want to be transformed! We all want to place our trust in God, not ourselves. How can you give God the chance to take control, to transform us?

- ✍ How can we all give of ourselves to reach out to others?
- ✍ How can we become **living signs** of God's kindness?
- ✍ How can we be better able to experience God's **transforming power** in ourselves?
- ✍ How, through tithing, through the Bishop's Annual Lenten Appeal, can we give of ourselves for the benefit of others – and become more dependant upon God and His transforming power?

