

SATURDAY MEN'S LENTEN SESSIONS #3 TOPIC: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

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PERSPECTIVE: *During Lent we focus inwardly on renewal. We focus on becoming the very best version of ourselves. We look for Easter to be a rebirth. We acknowledge the desire to turn away toward sin in our lives and turn to the nourishing word of God. God, in the person of Jesus, is waiting for us to return to Him. Like diets, like heart rehab programs, the making of a new person requires change. Lifestyle change can be one of the most difficult habits to embrace. We seem to know what is best for us. How do we come to grips with the inner most secrets that need mending or replacement? Can we call upon the Holy Spirit? Can we call upon the Sacraments to carry us from the deserts of our lives, the dry times in order to embark on a journey toward a garden of life that leads to fulfillment without self-destruction?*

GOAL: *To encourage each participant to examine one's engagement with actions that can nurture a closer relationship with God in discerning God's will and confirm our desire to take intentional **actions** to fulfil our journey with the Lord.*

OPENING PRAYER: (together) Loving Father, Here I am. I trust that you have an incredible plan for me. Transform me. Transform my life. Everything is on the table. Take what you want to take and give what you want to give. Transform me into the person you created me to be, so I can live the life you envision for me. I hold nothing back; I am 100 percent available. How can I help? Amen.

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION-Fr Vinod

OPENING PRAYER-Together

OVERVIEW Comments: Deacon Don

Sunday's Gospel: Luke:13 1-9 Read together:

.....And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree, but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'

7:40 GUEST PRESENTER: Peter Odon, exploring personal transformation, and ongoing Lent experience

7:50 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. What spiritual action or transformation is evident in Peter's story?
2. Where is God involved in the story of transformation?
3. Share with the group a time that you can claim a personal transformation" Was it in Lent? New Year's Resolution?

8:05 LARGE GROUP REPORTS

8:15 WRAP UP COMMENTS

8:20 WHERE CAN WE GO FROM HERE?

PERSONAL RETREAT

HOMEWORK

BLESSING: Fr. Vinod

Peter and for all those seeking to walk more closely with the Lord Jesus, our hope and salvation.

Thought for reflection and prayer: How we might feel about pursuing a personal transformation, might reflect on how we feel about our actions taken or not taken in pursuit of personal transformation in one's past?

Is this Lent any different in my readiness to pursue and active movement toward a transformation: turning away from sin and turning toward the good news of the Gospel. What Good News are you ready for?

INSPIRING REFLECTION-HOMEWORK-FOR ADVANCED STUDY

Rev. John R. Barker, OFM

1. A Carmelite nun, who by her own account was leading at best a mediocre life, was reading a passage from St. Augustine, when she recognized herself in him. She had always looked to the saints for inspiration, but had often walked away disconsolate, because "the Lord called them only once and they did not turn back and fall again... whereas in my case I had turned back so often that I was worn out from it.... As I began to read the *Confessions*, it seemed to me I saw myself in them."
2. "Oh, how a soul suffers," she wrote in her autobiography, "by losing the freedom it should have in being itself! May God be praised who gave me the life to rise up from a death so deadly." And from that moment the eternal fortunes of Teresa of Avila took a turn.
3. Augustine and Avela started out as spiritual procrastinators. Probably most of us procrastinate. We put off studying, or working in the yard, or writing, whatever. We know the problems it causes us and sometimes others. And we vow again and again to "work on it." Spiritual procrastination -- sloth, one of the deadly sins -- is far worse, because it can have catastrophic consequences. And maybe we vow again and again to "work on it." Or maybe we don't.
4. Today Jesus warns us that we court eternal disaster when we procrastinate with God. How many of can say that we are not like the little fig tree that refused to produce its figs? How many of us can say that we are doing all we know we are capable of doing for God? Each one of us has something -- some habitual sin, some attachment, some vice, some significant fault -- that prevents us from giving ourselves over completely to God's service. We all know what the problem is (or one of the problems, anyway). And we know we need to overcome it. But, like our friend Augustine, we aren't entirely sure we want to overcome it, not just yet. And, oh, what a lot of work and inconvenience it will be to overcome it! Who has the time or the energy or the inclination do that? So we procrastinate. We tell ourselves, with no sense of urgency, that we'll get to it sometime, maybe this Lent, maybe next, all the while "hesitating to die unto death and to live unto life."
5. Jesus tells us that, while God is patient, we cannot keep putting off until tomorrow what we know needs to be started today. There comes a time when we have to make the effort to bear that fruit or suffer the frightful consequences, which will extend beyond this life. I think sometimes we have trouble taking such warnings seriously. We should probably rethink that.
6. Well, fear not, my fellow fig trees, for we have the Lord as our gardener. He takes responsibility for us, offering to cultivate us and fertilize us with his grace, coaxing and urging and encouraging us on. If we trust him and put ourselves in his care, we have all we need from Christ to overcome whatever it is that keeps us from bearing the figs God made us to bear.
7. And, oh, what glorious fruit we could produce -- what a light we could be for the world, what salt we could be for the earth -- if only we could make the decision, right now, to accept Christ's offer to prune us, cultivate us, fertilize us. If only we would turn ourselves over to him - right now, why wait? -- and offer him whatever it is that are clinging to that keeps us from being ourselves, the glorious, fruitful fig trees God made us to be.
8. On Ash Wednesday, St. Paul appealed to us "not to receive the grace of God in vain...Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation."
9. May today be a day we choose one thing - just one thing - that keeps us from bearing fruit. Jesus' parable warns us that the consequences of not doing so will be disastrous. But we can do it, we really can, with God's grace. We just have to make the decision, today, to try. May God be praised who gives us the life to rise up from a death so deadly!