The Sisters of St. Thomas Aquinas

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"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself",

said Our Lord, and drawn by this Divine Magnet, souls sensitized in the sanctity of sufferings are lifted up from the earth, above all sordid things and closer and closer to the Crucified. Whether our years of sufferings be few or many, if our crucifixion be beside Him, there will come the reward of faithful, patient love. As the world with its weariness and pain melts away from our fading sight, we shall hear His voice: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," and He will bring us where "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away".

Monsignor Kirklin



Dear Reader,

As often as we feel a dread of soul upon hearing the word "Lent", we should recall that, in times past, the world welcomed the holy season with a light-hearted fervor because they were wholly convinced of the need to appease the Divine Justice for sins of men. "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (St. Luke, XIII, vs 3)

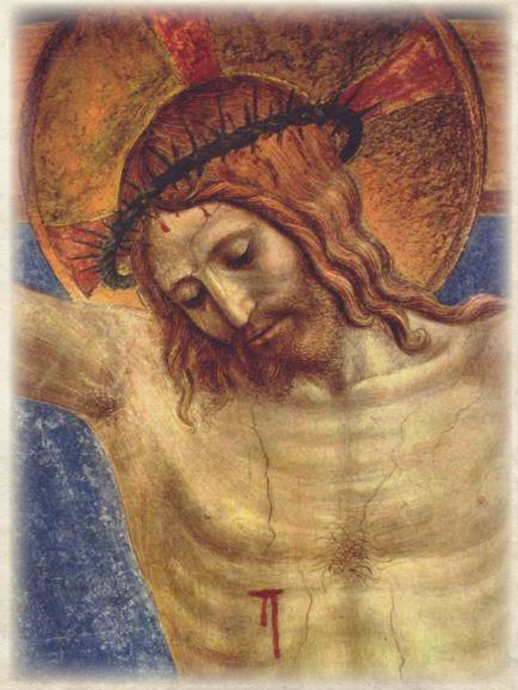
The faithful once subjected their bodies to a more severe Lenten fast than that of the present time. During all the days of Lent, they ate only fish, bread, herbs, and fruit and did not so much as taste flesh-meat, eggs and milk. Moreover, they drank no wine during Lent, and did not drink so much as a glass of water until the Office of Vespers had been sung, after having borne the labors of the day. This daily hunger must have served as a powerful reminder of their need to do penance for sin, to abstain from further sinning, and to perform good works.

No one presumed to excuse himself from the Lenten fast. Indeed, the following annal from the Liturgical Year gives proof of its strict observance: "Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia, being seized with a malady which rendered it dangerous to his health to take Lenten diet, applied...for leave to eat meat. The Pontiff commissioned two Cistercian abbots to inquire into the real state of the Prince's health; they were to grant the dispensation sought for if they found it necessary, but on the following conditions: that the King had not bound himself by a vow, of life, to fast during Lent; that the Fridays, the Saturdays, and the vigil of St. Mathias, were to be excluded from the dispensation; and, lastly, that the King was not to take his meal in presence of others, and was to observe moderation in what he took."

During the whole of Lent, "all amusements and theatrical entertainments were forbidden by civil authority." "No courts of law were allowed to be in session." There was no hunting during Lent, as "the spirit of the holy season was too sacred to admit such exciting and noisy sport." All these observances served to keep that spiritual peace so indispensable for the time of self-examination and prayer.

Another prevalent custom was the erection, at the beginning of Lent, of a large purple veil before the altar so as to hide the Blessed Sacrament from view. This was "a symbol of the penance to which the sinner ought to subject himself, in order to merit the sight of that Divine Majesty, before whose face he had committed so many outrages." The Church of Notre Dame continued this custom till the 1800's.

It can be assumed that the faithful did fervently unite themselves to the liturgy of this season. Surely, upon receiving the blessed ashes during the ceremonies of Ash Wednesday, they interiorly signed their souls with contrition



and humility; for, in entering into the sentiments of the Church, they were given the fortitude needed to persevere in the harsh penances of the next forty days. Even on weekdays of Lent, they participated in frequent processions to different churches. At the daily Mass of the feria, they welcomed the alteration from "Ite, Missa Est," to the "Benedicamus Domino," inviting them to remain in Church after Mass for further prayer.

"The observance of Lent is the very badge of the Christian warfare," stated Pope Benedict XIV in 1741. "By it we prove ourselves not to be enemies of the cross of Christ. By it we avert the scourges of Divine Justice. By it we gain strength against the princes of darkness, for it shields us with heavenly help. Should mankind grow remiss in their observance of Lent, it would be a detriment to God's glory, a disgrace to the Catholic religion, and a danger to Christian souls. Neither can it be doubted that such negligence would become the source of misery to the world, of public calamity, and of private woe."

"Remember," the Liturgical Year says, "that whatever changes the indulgence of the Church may lead her to make in her discipline, the justice of our God is ever the same.

In Jesus through Mary,
The Sisters



During Christmas vacation, the Florida Community had the opportunity to visit the Church of Bethesda by the Sea in Palm Beach, Florida. Although it is an Episcopal church, it is very traditional.

The Arizona Community visited the mountains of northern Arizona.



Renewal of vows on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

