



Society of the Sacred Heart

CHANGE OF SEASONS IS COMING

by Miss Katherine Weir, founding member of the Society of the Sacred Heart

Just as the seasons of nature change so also do the Seasons of the Liturgical Year. We notice it clearly in the Introit of the Mass for the Third Sunday after Epiphany: *Adore God, all you His Angels: Sion heard and was glad: and the daughters of Juda rejoiced . Ps. The lord hath reigned, Let the earth rejoice, let the many isles be glad. Ps. 96.*

Even some weeks after Christmas the Church is still rejoicing in the birth of Christ, the birth of the Redeemer. But suddenly there is a distinct change, like a cold wind in September warns of the coming change of Season: *The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrow of hell encompassed me: And in my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy temple. Ps. I will love Thee, O Lord my strength: the Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer. Ps. 17.*

Why this stark change in tone in the Liturgy? The church is preparing us for the penitential season and also looking toward the Resurrection in this Introit for Septuagesima Sunday. Now we need to look at our need for redemption, our fallen nature, our need of the Redeemer born to us at Christmas. It is not yet Lent, but it is that cold wind forecasting a change in the Liturgical season. Holy Mother Church is giving us an opportunity to shift gears, and begin preparing our hearts and souls for the great drama of our Redemption.

LENT WILL SOON BE HERE!

Our first thought may be, " What shall I give up?" But that is the wrong question; rather we should ask, " How can I prepare for Easter?" Here are some formulas which may be helpful. Write down your resolutions and review them as Lent proceeds.

ABSTINENCE: THE MARK OF TRUE LOVE

Spiritual. Aim to grow in a particular virtue, or to overcome a particular fault. For example, try to be more patient or charitable, more ready to help others. Fight laziness or a feeling sorry for yourself. Be more aware of the presence of God. Think of the advice given by the confessor and try to work on that.

Material. Yes, there can be a giving up for Lent, especially of those things that take us away from prayer or time to help others. Also we need to discipline our bodies in order to learn to resist temptation, and make ourselves ready to serve. We need, also, to do penance for our sins and faults.

LENTEN HINTS FROM SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Practice the mortifications which most often present themselves to you; for this is the thing we must do first.

It is a true sign of love to deprive ourselves of something for the sake of the one we love. What have you given up for God?

It is not enough to fast exteriorly if we do not fast interiorly, if we do not accompany the fast of body with that of spirit.

A habitual moderation in eating and drinking is much better than certain rigorous abstinences made from time to time. Generally speaking, such hard practices are followed by excesses of relaxation.

Don't be satisfied with confessing your venial sins merely as to the fact, but accuse yourself of the motive that led you to commit them.

PRAYER: GET BACK TO THE BASICS; GIVE THAT LITTLE EXTRA

First we should try to be faithful to our ordinary prayers. Then we should make every effort to get to daily Mass as often as possible. Time spent before the Blessed Sacrament is a beautiful means of preparation. Adding a litany or a Rosary is also recommended. Even if, in your busy schedule, you can only offer a decade of the Rosary that would be helpful.

LENTEN HINTS FROM SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Keep carefully to frequent Communion: believe me, you could do nothing more certain to strengthen yourself in virtue.

Whoever receives Communion frequently and devoutly, so strengthens the health and life of his soul, that it is hardly possible for him to be poisoned by any evil desires.

Begin all your prayers, whether mental or vocal, in the presence of God. Keep to this rule without exception and you will quickly see how helpful it will be.

You tell me that you do not have the time to give two or three hours to prayer. Who is asking you to do so?...Who can prevent you from speaking to Him in the depth of your heart? Make short but fervent aspirations...When your ordinary work is not specially engrossing, let your heart be fixed more on God than on it.

If possible, pray in the morning, which is the best time for spiritual exercises. Then think of them during the rest of the day.

Do not hurry along and say many things, but try to speak from your heart. A single "Our Father" said with feeling has greater value than many said quickly and hurriedly.

SPIRITUAL READING: FOOD FOR SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

- Try to read some spiritual work for at least 15 minutes each day.
- Be encouraged by reading the lives of the saints, or a life of Christ.
- Read the Gospels or Acts of Apostles.
- Listen to CD recordings on spirituality.

LENTEN HINTS FROM SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

You should always have some good devout book at hand...daily read some small portion attentively, as though you were reading letters sent by the Saints from Paradise to teach you the way thither, and encourage you to follow them.

Read Lives of the Saints, which are as a mirror to you of Christian life, and try to imitate their actions according to your circumstances; for although many things which the Saints did may not be practicable for those who live in the world, they may be followed more or less.... Others are more the subjects of our admiring wonder than of imitation...although these should tend to kindle a great love of God in our hearts.

BE OF GOOD COURAGE!

Lent may seem like a mountain to be climbed at the beginning but it brings much joy and peace to the soul. It is really a gift that the Church offers to her children each year to prepare them for the Feast of the Resurrection.

Have patience and lay aside a bit of that anxious care of yourselves, and have no fear that anything will be wanting to you. For if you trust in God, he will take care of you and everything necessary for your perfection.

It is not necessary for us always to have the feeling and movement of courage...It is enough for us to have a right desire to fight valiantly together with perfect confidence that the spirit of God will assist us with His help when occasion to use it presents itself.