

Dear Friends,

The season of Lent reminds us about the need for conversion.

Few of us will have a burning bush experience as Moses had, which was a turning point in his life.

From that time on, Moses recognized God's call and followed it. And not many of us will experience conversion as radically as Paul did on the road to Damascus. A tireless persecutor of Christians in the blink of an eye

became a Christ-follower. His encounter with Jesus changed him from persecutor to defender of the faith. Few of us come to God as Francis of Assisi did. He abandoned a pleasure-oriented life to devote himself to spreading the Gospel and serving the sick and poor. Denounced by his father as a madman and disinherited, Francis founded a religious Order whose members shared in his missionary efforts.



Although few of us will ever know such dramatic conversion experiences, we have all been called by God to a change of heart, mind and soul. When we look at the lives of those who experienced conversion, we see that conversion is not a self-help project which we ourselves can do - conversion is a response to a call from God. Conversion is a gift from God and it is an ongoing process. In one of his letters, Thomas Merton wrote, ***“We are not converted only once in our lives, but many times; and this endless series of large and small conversions, inner revolutions, leads to our transformation in Christ.”*** Each one of us needs these small and large conversions. As a special season of growth, the six weeks of Lent provide an annual opportunity for turning again to God and, in that turning, to bear fruit in faithful service. Indeed, Lent is such an important opportunity that a spiritual director once said, ***“A Lent missed is a year lost from spiritual life.”*** We should not miss “another year”.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us a warning. He tells us the parable of a fig tree which was not bearing fruit. The unfruitful fig tree represents anyone who does not pay attention to the Lord's call to bear fruit. The Lord provides us with all attention and graces needed for doing the will of the Father. Jesus gives us grace at Baptism; he gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. There are countless gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit that we have received. Despite all these, it is possible that God may find we have borne little or no fruit at all. God is gentle and merciful and he desires that all should live in his presence. As Jesus says in the Gospel, ***“Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down”***. God is kind and merciful, but as we can see in the parable of fig tree, the time to bear fruit is now.

With prayers,
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