

February 19, 2023

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lv 19:1-2, 17-18

1 Cor 3:16-23

Mt 5:38-48

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

GROW: Today is the last Sunday in Ordinary Time before Lent begins. I realize in saying it that way, however, it sounds like a warning (“the bookstore will be closing in five minutes, please bring your purchases to the register!”) rather than an acknowledgement of the celebration that it is. So let me put it another way: Today is the 7th – of 33 – Sundays in Ordinary Time this year, which means, we’ve only just begun. We are in some of the earliest days of the Church’s “ordered” (ordinary/numbered) approach to helping us mature and grow in faith. We do this by living with and in the life of Christ over the course of a year. At each step we celebrate the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, but we also set aside different seasons to focus on those specific elements. And so it makes sense that as we approach Lent, we hear more about what exactly God asks of us. Lent will be a season of preparation for Christ’s passion; have we prepared our hearts accordingly to receive him? Today’s readings remind us of what sets us back: hatred for others; desire for revenge; grudges; worldly wisdom; all things which are destructive of God’s temple – our souls, as Saint Paul says. Having a heart full of these things means there is no room for love, which means there is no room for Christ. Let us pray for God’s help in ridding ourselves of all that is destructive, and for the strength to grow a heart only for him.

GO EVANGELIZE | PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

GO: I’d argue that in some ways, Lent actually starts before Ash Wednesday since it requires forethought and planning. We have to prepare for a season of preparation! We have to figure out what to fast from or add to our spiritual lives, and how we might specifically direct our almsgiving. But how ready *are* we to respond in a meaningful way to the fact that Christ died for love of us? His death transformed our death into the promise of eternal life. Today’s Gospel offers practical actions, things which all Christians should strive for daily, but especially observe during Lent if a spiritual reset is needed. Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek. Hand over your cloak. Go the extra mile: “Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.” Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors. Lent is a call to act out of love, especially in tough situations. Take these next couple of days to prepare for Ash Wednesday and the weeks that follow.

REFLECT: Spend some time taking stock of your spiritual life. Are you holding contempt for someone, or seeking revenge for something? Where might you be falling short in striving to imitate Christ? Bring these thoughts to God in prayer.