

Reflections

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To Know That God Loves Us

We begin the Lenten Season. According to the intention of the Church, it is a time of renewal, penance and conversion. For the first Christians, the proclamation of penance was “Good News.” God was going to forgive them their failings, God was going to reveal his love and compassion for them.

For us modern people today, it has to do with **bad news**. If in a Christian assembly they speak of Lent, penance, and sacrifice, many faces become sad. They become fearful about what they hold most dear: their pocketbook, cigarettes, television, good food..... What might be the reason for this change between the early and the modern Christians?

In the early Church, only those who had committed serious crimes did penance: public penitents. But on Holy Thursday, at the Mass of reconciliation, these sinners seemed so happy, renewed, and innocent, that the other faithful felt jealous of them. They lamented not having experienced such a charitable penance. The following year, they too would ask to be admitted to the Lenten penance.

And we, the Christians of today? We think too much of ourselves. We think about the renunciations, the cross, sacrifices, Lenten confession.....as things which will cost us something and which we fear.

But we do not think about God who summons us.....who is waiting for us and who will turn everything into joy if we surrender our heart to Him.

Many of us Christians have an imperfect idea and even a false idea about our religion. We believe that religion consists in what we do for God, in those unpleasant things which we impose on ourselves for God.

How many things I’ve done for God! I’ve sacrificed so much for Him! I’ve renounced so many things for love of Him!

The authentic Christian is the one who looks especially at the things God has done for us.....the great and marvelous things He has done with the poverty and smallness of his followers. With this attitude, one never feels satisfied. He/she always wants to grow and deepen even more. It is the religion of the Creed which does not say one single word about us, but sings of all of God’s initiatives to demonstrate his love.

We are Christians, and if after so many years we believe, then we know that God loves us freely. God is Father and to be father is to love first. It is taking the initiative in love. God loves us before we love Him, without our loving Him. God does not need our sacrifices in order to love us.

God – like all those who truly love us, like our parents, for example – does not love us because we are worthy of His love. Instead, He loves us because of His goodness, because of the generosity and faithfulness of His own heart.

God loves us so much that surely He will be able to awaken in us, some day, a love response similar to His. Such a response of love would be, without a doubt, the most beautiful and precious fruitfulness of this Lenten Season.

Would not this love change the sad state of our sacrifices and Lenten renunciations into a joyful witness of our gratitude and generosity toward God?

And applied to us: Would this Lent not be the proper time to grow in sanctity and the time to convert ourselves into new men and women?

I think that this is the great opportunity to show God our childlike, faithful and generous love.

Questions for reflection

1. How do we respond to God’s love?
2. Are renunciations hard for us? Are sacrifices of love for our Father God hard for us?
3. Do we feel loved by God?

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