

On Ash Wednesday, we began our journey into Lent, aware that we are to take up battle against spiritual evils. I introduced the personal revelation Sr. Faustina received during a three-day retreat with Jesus. Today we continue.

We go to confession to confess sin, right? Listen to what Jesus said to Faustina: **At the first opportunity, reveal temptation to the confessor.** Our sins result from consenting to temptation.

We receive grace for discernment of choices and strength to do the right thing from the Sacrament of Penance. Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to the Church, keys which not only unlock for us the reservoir of mercy for sinners, but also a store of grace for saints.

Temptation reveals the plan of the evil one in his spiritual warfare. How much better is it to renounce the temptation than it is confess the sin? We need grace for both. Jesus implores us, don't wait for grace, but come and get it! At the first opportunity, reveal temptation to the confessor.

Jesus said, **Put your self-love in the last place, so that it does not taint your deeds.** Jesus said to Faustina what he tells us in the gospel for Ash Wednesday, "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father." (Mat. 6:1)

It is good to be aware of the dignity that God has bestowed upon us. To quote from a poem by Sr. John Joseph, a Sister of Life, "You are loved by God the Father, He has called you by your name. You are precious and holy in his eyes. You are sacred, you are holy, unique and unrepeatable, made in the image and likeness of God."

Our dignity as children of God does not give us license to be selfish and filled with self-love. When the pursuit of personal praise becomes our motive for doing good...we have already received our reward. Jesus wants us to be motivated by love of others and he wants to reward us with what, "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it even entered into human heart the things which God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor. 2:9)

Jesus said, **Bear with yourself with great patience.** Patience is a secret weapon that helps us to keep our peace of soul even in the great storms of life. Bearing with oneself is part of humility and trust.

We trust God and trust that his grace is enough for us (2 Cor 12:9). God is patient with us, so we need to be patient with ourselves as we grow toward perfection. The devil wants to tempt us with impatience, to turn us against our selves so we become angry. See yourself from God's view. He is infinitely patient. He delights in our tokens of thanks and in our every good work.

Impatience and anger lead to frustration and discouragement. These lead us to think of the Christian life as a futile commitment. The devil dances when we give up. The devil wins the battle when we surrender.

God loves you, so you must love yourself, not with self-love, but with an acceptance of the dignity that is yours. With your dignity, do deeds of mercy in secret, and your father who sees in secret will repay you.

Lastly for today, Jesus said, **Do not neglect interior mortifications.** The scriptures teach us that demons can be evicted by prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Interior mortifications are weapons of warfare. They can be small sacrifices offered with great love. The power of sacrificial love evicts the enemy.

Now is the acceptable time: make a commitment of some form of personal sacrifice. Be willing to sacrifice in love in whatever way you can.

On March 3 and 4 we celebrated the memorials of St. Katherine Drexel and St. Casimir. Casimir was the son of the king of Poland. He cultivated the virtues of chastity and generosity to the poor. He had particular devotion to the Eucharist and to the Virgin Mary. It is unlikely that he leapt from selfishness to charity. Rather he cultivated charity by small sacrifices. St. Katherine was born in Philadelphia in 1858. At the age of 33 she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, dedicated to work among Native Americans and African Americans. A survey at the time described 250,000 Native

Americans neglected if not practically abandoned, and over 9 million African Americans struggling through the aftermath of slavery. With her family fortune, she opened schools, founded a university, funded chapels, convents and monasteries. She built the school at Red Lake Mission here in the Diocese of Crookston!

Imagine if just a smidgen of selfishness would have reigned in the hearts of these two saints. Casimir would have had every reason to enjoy the benefits of a royal family, and Katherine would have enjoyed fur coats and tea parties with the social elite of Philadelphia. They didn't! Rather, they gave it all, and God gave them as saints to the Church.

**Do not neglect interior mortifications.**

**Bear with yourself with great patience.**

**Put self-love in the last place, so that it does not taint your deeds.**

**At the first opportunity, reveal the temptation to the confessor.**