

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time_A

February 15, 2026

St. Edward's Parish

Friends today is the last Sunday of Ordinary time before we begin the season of Lent, a season of 40 days for penance and conversion to prepare for Easter. The Gospel reading today offers a fitting springboard to Lent.

We continue reading from Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" in the Gospel of Matthew today. Here Jesus makes it clear that He does not intend to abolish the law of the Old Testament but to bring it to fulfillment. He proceeds then to apply this to several moral laws of the Old Testament such as murder, adultery, divorce, and swearing of oaths. What we see in each case is Jesus not casting aside the moral laws but deepening and perfecting them. He starts each statement with "You have heard it said..." and lists a moral law of the Old Testament. Then He follows with "But I say to you..." and deepens and perfects that law. For example, He first cites the law against murder, "You shall not murder". Then He goes deeper, showing that it not enough to avoid murder, but we must address even those places in our hearts where hatred begins such as anger and insults. He does the same with adultery, the sanctity of the marriage bond, and the swearing of oaths. In each case, Jesus takes the basic law which prohibits certain external evil actions, and He goes to the depth of the heart, where these sins begin. This is one of the major developments from the Old Testament to the New. Rather than merely giving commandments, Jesus offers both His teaching and grace to transform us from within so that sin is addressed at its very origin, namely, the disordered human heart.

This draws us to consider Lent, a season of penance and conversion. It is modeled after Jesus' 40 days in the desert where He fasted and prayed and overcame the temptations of Satan. People generally approach Lent as a time to give up something they like, such as chocolate or coffee. That is good; yet Lent goes deeper than this. True penance is about the conversion of our heart; an interior conversion where we turn away from sin and disordered attachments and turn more faithfully towards God (e.g. CCC 1430). This interior conversion is assisted and expressed with acts that help us turn

toward God and atone for our sins. The three categories that are commonly identified are: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Let us consider a few practical things about these.

First, let us keep in mind that Lent is not merely about fasting but about conversion, a call to change. It is good to take one or two items of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving and do so with an eye towards conversion. For example, for prayer we might consider putting in place a habit that will both atone for sin and truly help us turn to God. For example, the daily Rosary; reading 15 minutes of Scripture each day or from the Catechism or a writing of a saint; or attending an extra Mass each week.

Fasting involves some mortification of the body. Discipline over our appetites and desires is a crucial part of the spiritual life. We can fast from food, for example desserts, coffee, meat etc.... We might also choose fasting and discipline of the other senses. For example, of the eyes by reducing or eliminating television or social media; of the ears and tongue by avoiding useless conversation; of the body by getting up on time and going to bed on time (keeping a fixed schedule for prayer and work).

Almsgiving is an act of charity towards another. This could involve material help or money, such as giving to a charity or an individual person, but not necessarily. Charity best begins at home. We might think of things that make life better for those with whom we live and work. For example, if we are often grumpy at home, we might aim to combat that defect by offering extra patience, or if we are selfish with our time, to give our attention more generously to our spouse or children. We might refrain from being touchy when people critique us or keep a disposition of cheerfulness in all circumstances. These kinds of daily self-sacrifices can often do more for our conversion than simply giving up chocolate.

As we approach this holy season of Lent, let us keep our eyes fixed on Lent as a time for the conversion of our hearts, turning away from sin, disordered attachments, self-centeredness at turning more fully towards God and the people who are right next to us.