

# 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 10&11, 2018 – Pre-Lent Reflection

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Depending on your disposition, if you're a pessimist, bad things come in 3's, but if you're an optimist, good things come in 3's. Whichever way you lean, 3 seems to be an important, full number.

The Constitution of the United States established a republic with 3 branches of government to serve as check and balance: the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial.

For years and years, doctors and dieticians have promoted our physical and emotional wellbeing by advising us to eat 3 balanced meals each day.

The tradition in our schools has been to teach us the basics, the 3 R's: Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic.

In baseball, the batter is given many chances to hit the ball, but if you swing and miss 3 times, "Yer out!"

In modern basketball, teams like the Golden State Warriors vanquish the competition and win championships because they are so deadly from beyond the 3-point arc.

This week on Ash Wednesday, the Church invites us into the desert with Our Lord to confront our demons and to prepare for our mission to be His disciples. Jesus prepared for His ministry, with its teaching and healing and suffering, with a period in the desert; a time when He could sort things out, steel Himself for the challenges ahead, spend

time in communion with His Father without distraction, and do battle with evil forces that would love to see Him fail or give up. Forty days He went through this training, this physical and spiritual boot camp. Beginning Wednesday, He asks us to join Him in our own desert, our own training camp so that we might recover what we may have lost, find time to be with God where before we were too busy, shape up in us what's grown soft and lazy, and open our eyes to the fact that the life of a disciple of Christ isn't all about me, but is much more about serving my brother and sister. He invites us to join Him in that desert of self-denial so that we can really come face to face with the evil we've allowed to worm its way into our lives even though we deny it and say, "That's not really me," despite the fact that it IS really me who does some pretty rotten things!

But the Church doesn't send us into this desert naked and helpless. She offers us supplies to sustain us, a regimen to build us up, a diet to get us in shape, companionship to support us, and a mission of charity to keep us focused on the prize.

Lent is God's 3-prong program to get us in the best spiritual and even physical shape of our lives: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. Forty days to pray, to spend time with God, to worship when over the last period of time we've allowed our relationship with Him to grow stale and distant, just a matter of hafta's and obligations without any passion and not too much love ... Lent gives us time to PRAY. Forty days to fast, to be a little hungry for the One who really satisfies when over the last period of time I've stuffed myself with all sorts a junk that only leaves me fat and feeling guilty ... Lent challenges me to go through a cleanse, to FAST. Forty days to give alms ... 325 days of the year I can get pretty wrapped up in me: what I want; what I need; what I'm gonna

buy; do ya wanna hear the latest about me?! ... Lent gives me a Rice Bowl and invites me to fill it so that someone else can have what they need, someone else can eat, someone else can get medicine, someone else can learn to read and write ... Lent gives me the privilege of giving ALMS for forty days.

So, how about you? Lent is upon us with its Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving ... its 3 disciplines. Are those good things coming in 3's ... or will you avoid them like the plague 'cause they're bad things comin' that might just shake you up?