

Homily for the First Sunday of Lent

February 21, 2021

This Old House (Rm 6:6)

Two wives were talking about their husbands. One says to the other, “I hear that your husband is a real Mr. Fixit!” The other wife responds, “He’s so good at home repairs that they have a special VIP area for him in the emergency room.”

Welcome to Lent! It is a time offered through the wisdom of the Church for doing home improvements! Oh, I am not talking about the house you live in but our interior home: our lives, the skin we live in. Lent is a time of honestly and objectively looking at ourselves in order to find areas that need moral and spiritual repair or improvement, and set to work doing it.

For as Christians we are always a work-in-progress; saints in the making. But over time aspects of our life in Christ can get neglected or damaged. Things can start to deteriorate.

And while we may know that work needs to be done comfortableness with the way things are, other interests, a sense of helplessness or hopelessness over the size of the task, or just old-fashioned procrastination, may delay our getting started for years if not decades.

But we don’t have the option with our own lives to Love It or List It. We cannot walk away from ourselves. However, we can and should

improve on ourselves. We must recognize that each one of us is a worthwhile Fixer Upper. We are worth saving. God thinks so!

But we can only set about the task if we love ourselves and love God. For love is the great motivator. Only with a heart made new can we begin to do what needs to be done. So, we may need to ask the Lord to remove from us our heart of stone and give to us a heart of flesh (see Ezekiel 11:19).

God is the Great Architect who designed humanity in His image and likeness. That original design, however, has suffered millennia of damage and neglect due to sin. But God has given us a new blueprint for humanity's restoration. That blueprint is His Son, Jesus Christ.

As it says in the Second Vatican Council document, *Gaudium et Spes*:
“[Jesus] Who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15, cf. 2 Cor. 4:4), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward.” (GS 22).

We now seek to renovate our lives according to His example, to be transformed by His grace. To “*put on the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*” (Ephesians 4:24).

And to do this task we enlist the help of the ultimate home and heart renovator, the Holy Spirit:

“And all of us..., are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Let's face it, becoming a new person in Christ is hard work. In renovating our interior home, we start pulling down old walls that have obstructed God's light in our lives, only to discover hidden things that demand more attention than we thought.

But that just lets us know that this is a long-term project, the project of a lifetime. We may not get it all done at once but we can get it started. Tidying Up, not with Marie Kondo, but with Christ's Spirit in us. Some of the practical tools that we have in our toolbox with which to work are prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

And even though we won't get everything perfect we still need to persevere. Over time we will see gradual improvements and even some great improvements.

Such a task may not be easy, it may even seem impossible, but always remember Jesus' assurance that *“for God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26).

The repentance, conversion and renewal of one's life may be messy and disruptive but it a necessary task, and we begin it with the end in mind, the finished product, the person God made us to be.

“So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

That is what Lent is all about. Allowing ourselves to become that new creation in Christ which was initiated at our baptism.

So, this Lent let’s roll up our sleeves, allow God to “enter under [our] roof,” and begin the much-needed work of heart and home renovations. Allow God to both Fix It and Finish It.

For *“I am confident of this,”* says Saint Paul, *“that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 1:6). God bless.