

Lent: A Time For Renewal

Lent: A Time for Renewal by Vu Ngoc As I reflect on this Lenten Season, I see that there are two possibly good news for us. The first is that all of us, including you and I, are not the same people we were seven years ago. Believe it or not, this is certainly true. About every seven years, we are entirely new individuals in terms of our physical make up. Every cell, every atom in our body dies and is replaced with new ones. There is not one cell, not one atom in our body today that was there seven years ago. This process of physical change has been aptly given the name the "seven-year switch." I don't know how you feel, but I find this information rather refreshing. The process of dying and returning to life is taking place at all moments. And every seven years, we become completely new individuals. How amazing! As exciting as this news is, I believe that there is another news that is even more exciting. This is the promise of God that not only our body but also our soul can be made new. And it doesn't have to take seven years. In fact, it can happen today, and at this very moment. St. Paul writes, "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation." So if you want to change, to become new, take notice of this word of hope. Christ offers all of us an opportunity to make a new beginning, a new life. Here. Now. But how does that new life in Christ begin? It begins with the recognition of who we are. Living in this modern society, you and I often find ourselves quite busy with school and work. We feel that we don't have enough time for ourselves, not even time to check on our own lives. Fortunately, Lent is designed precisely to be a time for us to reflect on and to reexamine ourselves. Lent is a time for us to find our identity before God. And it is also a time for us to acknowledge our shortcomings and our failures with God and with one another, and ask the Lord for pardon and strength. Becoming a new person begins with the recognition of who we are. Nevertheless, as St. Paul says, we do not truly become new persons in Christ until we ourselves become ambassadors of reconciliation. Sometimes you and I experience Christ in our lives, but we manage to let that conversion experience cause us to look down on others, to avoid others, and even to despise others. This is a false conversion. If we truly become a new person in Christ, we see others in a new way. We see them as God sees us; we reach out to them as God reaches out to us; we forgive them as God forgives us; and most importantly we love them as God loves us. Becoming truly a new person in Christ is to become ambassadors of reconciliation. Therefore, as we approach Easter, the time when we celebrate the paschal mystery of Christ: suffering, death, and resurrection, we must ask ourselves: Are we ready for a new life? Are we ready for a new resurrection in Christ? We can wait seven years while our body renews itself. Or we can begin right now, at this moment, by renewing ourselves in Christ.

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