

On TWO occasions during Lord Jesus' earthly pilgrimage, the Father spoke out from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son!" 1. At Christ's Baptism. 2. At His Transfiguration.

Holy Baptism. One of the seven... sacraments. The sacrament of REGENERATION. God generated us in the first place, in the Garden of Eden. When Satan tempted us, we fell, and we became the sinful, mortal human race that we are. Then God sent His beloved Son to RE-GENERATE us.

We enter into the re-generation process through Holy Baptism. When we get baptized into Christ, everything starts fresh. Human purity restored, an open-ended friendship with God begins.

You know that Lent exists primarily as the final period of preparation for adults who will be baptized during the night before Easter. In other words, Lent means, first of all: the final stage of study and purification for non-Christian adults about to become Christians.

In the original Passover, the ancient People of God passed dry-shod through the Red Sea and marched on, toward the Promised Land. During Lent we integrate the stranger and the sojourner among us into our People, the pilgrim Church, to march forward with us.

To embrace the grace of Christian faith, a soul must search itself very deeply. Someone seeking to live the life of the Church must look within. When we do that, we discover the profound need that we all have for the Savior and Redeemer of the human race.

Our bodies get thirsty and need liquid refreshment. But our souls thirst, ultimately, for God. And only Jesus Christ offers the water that truly quenches that thirst.

We need light to guide us in this world. When the sun goes down, a lot of us have a hard time driving. But, even more so, we need interior light to understand the meaning of life, and how to attain it. Only Jesus Christ shines the inner light that guides us to true peace, to heaven.

Above all, when we face reality squarely, we immediately recognize: All of us are marching inexorably toward death. No one can stop that clock from ticking. But Jesus offers the true divine life that overcomes human mortality.

So Lent exists primarily to help students of Christianity to confront all these truths of human nature, and to understand them by the light of the Gospel and the Church's teaching. When any human being who has learned the basic of Catholicism struggles for forty days to grasp just how deeply we need the Christ,

then that soul can embrace the Christian faith with real freedom and commitment at Easter.

But Lent isn't just for un-baptized catechumens. Lent also exists to remind us already-baptized Christians about what happened to us at the font. God regenerated us there, to live as His friends, as the children of His household. We need to reach into the depths of our souls, too, to rediscover the always-new, always-fresh presence of Christ's truth and life. When we were baptized into Him, Jesus claimed us as HIS forever.

We already-baptized people, as we reach into these interior depths during Lent, usually find that we need to be re-cleansed by the baptismal water. How do we do that? By going to confession! One ancient name for the sacrament of Confession is... second Baptism.

Now, speaking of second things—what about the second time the Father declared, “This is my beloved Son!” The gospel we read a moment ago. When the Lord's body shone with brilliant divine light, transfigured. At that moment, the human regeneration accomplished by Christ, usually invisible to our eyes, was revealed.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River was the sacrament of our FIRST regeneration. And Christ's Transfiguration is the

sacrament of our SECOND regeneration. That is, our bodily resurrection. When Christ comes again, in the glory He revealed at the Transfiguration, sin and Satan and death will no longer have any power over us. We will receive unending, divine bodily life. We Catholic Christians live for nothing less than that.