

## Lent - 1st Sunday

- Jesus' first words in the Gospel of Mark...are a bit mysterious:
  - *"This is the time of fulfillment."*
    - What does He mean by that?
  - With these words...
    - Jesus is summing up the entire history of humanity.
  - And the fulcrum point...
    - as St Peter reminds us in the Second Reading...
    - is His own passion...death...and resurrection.
  - With these words...
    - Jesus is ushering in...the third and final age of human history.
- First...there was the age of creation...
  - when Adam and Eve...lived in an unbroken communion with God.
  - This ended with original sin...
    - which drove them out of paradise...
    - and into the desert of our fallen nature.
- Thus the second age...the age of the promise...began.
  - God promised Adam and Eve...
    - that He would send a Savior...
    - a Holy King who would free us...
    - from the dominion of Satan...
    - that their sin had caused.
  - And in this second age...
    - God gradually prepared the world...
    - through His holy prophets...
    - for that King's coming.
- And when Jesus finally arrived...
  - it was the *"time of fulfillment"*...
    - the fulfillment of God's promise to send that Savior.
  - And in this third and final period of human history...
    - God entered into space and time...
    - in order to rescue us...from sin and destruction.
  - He did this through His incarnation...His taking on our flesh...
    - the grace of which...
    - is now extended through space and time....
    - through His Church.
  - And the end of this third age...
    - it will yield the new heavens and earth...
      - spoken about in Revelation...
    - So it's the end of the Kingdom's beginning...
      - and the beginning of its coming...
      - to full maturity...at the end.

- This basic knowledge...of where we've come from...
  - and where we're going...
    - it has always been a great source of courage for the saints...
      - especially for the martyrs...
        - for those who gave their very lives...
        - for the very Creed we profess...each and every Sunday.
    - And it can be a great source of encouragement for us as well...
      - and that's something...we're going to need...
        - because doing what is right...
        - and staying faithful to the will of Jesus Christ...
        - has never been easy...in any age...
      - but in our own age...it's going to get down right hard...
        - as the persecution of those who are faithful to Jesus Christ...
        - only increases.
    - At the heart of that...
      - is the continued push...
        - behind the very banner...
        - mentioned in our first reading.
      - But of course the Rainbow...
        - that's God's symbol...
        - it's a symbol of His conventional love...
        - His marriage bond...
          - between Himself...
          - and His holy people.
    - Of course we need to love those...who fly that banner...with other intent.
      - We need to love them...
        - because they are members of our family and friends...
        - so we do already love them...on a natural level.
      - But we also need to love them...
        - because we too have our own Cross to bear in life...
        - even if it happens to be different from them...
        - because we all stand in need of redemption.
      - So we do need to love them...
        - powerfully...compassionately...even sacrificially...
      - but we must not sacrifice...
        - the goodness...truth...and beauty...
        - of how God made us...from the very beginning...
          - male and female...
        - with complimentary...but distinct gifts and graces...
        - that help us be...together...the true image and likeness of God.
    - So we really need to keep firmly...before our eyes...
      - the knowledge of where we've come from...and where we're going...
      - because more and more...as a Church...like Jesus in our Gospel...
      - we're going to be driven out...into the desert...to be tempted and tried.

- St. Tarsicius...is someone who went down this path.
  - I've shared his story with our Confirmandi...
    - He's in one of our stained glass windows back there...
      - the third window back on the west side...
      - he's on the top right hand corner.
    - We can see him with two figures hovering over him...
      - one an angel...and a Roman soldier.
  - He was living in Rome...
    - when Christianity was illegal...
    - and the Church was forced go underground...
    - while experiencing frequent waves...of violent persecution.
  - One day...
    - while carrying the Blessed Sacrament...
      - to those imprisoned for the faith...
    - he was stopped and questioned by a soldier...
      - someone recognized him...as a Christian.
    - He ultimately gave his life...for bringing Jesus Christ...
      - from inside the Church...to those in the outside world.
    - And my brothers and sisters...we must never be afraid to do the same.
- Much like pagan Rome...we live in the midst of a society...
  - that is obsessed with building a kingdom of peace here on earth...
    - a kingdom that simply cannot exist without Jesus Christ...
    - and His way of life for us.
  - Like the tower of Babel...
    - no matter what we do without Him...
      - even our best intended efforts...
      - to love and serve others...
      - they will all eventually come crashing down.
    - And we see that kind of destruction all around us...
      - it's rampant...in the hopelessness and despair.
  - But you and I...hold in our hearts...
    - the very answer...to all the worlds troubles:
      - It's the same Jesus Christ...that St. Tarcicius...was dying to share.
    - We need that kind of passion and excitement...
      - to bring Jesus to others.
    - So ask for that grace from the Lord!
      - He's dying to give it!
  - Of course not everyone...is going to love us in return.
    - Jesus promised that it would be so...
      - but it is...a risk...worth taking...
    - because some of them...will take us up on the offer...
      - and finally discover for themselves...
      - the only thing that can truly bring hope to the hopeless...
      - even while still living...in the midst...of this fallen this world.