

The following article elucidates part of our Traditional liturgy. These riches have been dropped from the Novus Ordo in favor of "Ordinary Time". Dom Guéranger was the liturgical reformer of the Latin Church in 19th century in France. He received the gratitude of the Popes for his work, and left a valuable legacy of liturgical knowledge for future generations. Thanks to his scholarship and faith, we are able to recapture the deeply spiritual meaning of this sacred time which the Church fostered for upwards of a thousand years.

The Season of Septuagesima

Dom Prosper Guéranger, O.S.B.

The History of Septuagesima

The season of Septuagesima comprises the three weeks immediately preceding Lent. It forms one of the principal divisions of the liturgical year, and is itself divided into three parts, each part corresponding to a week: the first is called *Septuagesima*; the second, *Sexagesima*; the third, *Quinquagesima*.

All three are named from their numerical reference to Lent, which, in the language of the Church, is called *Quadragesima*, that is, Forty, because the great feast of Easter is prepared for by the holy exercises of forty days. The words *Quinquagesima*, *Sexagesima*, and *Septuagesima*, tell us of the same great solemnity as looming in the distance, and as being the great object towards which the Church would have us now begin to turn all our thoughts, and desires, and devotion.

Now, the feast of Easter must be prepared for by forty days of recollectedness and penance. Those forty days are one of the principal seasons of the liturgical year, and one of the most powerful means employed by the Church for exciting in the hearts of her children the spirit of their Christian vocation. It is of the utmost importance that such a season of grace should produce its work in our souls – the renovation of the whole spiritual life. The Church, therefore, has instituted a preparation for the holy time of Lent. She gives us the three weeks of Septuagesima, during which she withdraws us, as much as may be, from the noisy distractions of the world, in order that our hearts may be more readily impressed by the solemn warning she is to give us at the commencement of Lent by marking our foreheads with ashes.

This prelude to the holy season of Lent was not known in the early ages of Christianity: its institution would seem to have originated in the Greek Church. Besides the six Sundays of Lent, on which by universal custom the faithful never fasted, the practice of this Church prohibited fasting on the Saturdays likewise; consequently their Lent was short by twelve days of the forty spent by our Savior doing penance in the desert. To make up the deficiency, they were obliged to begin their Lent so many days earlier...

The Church of Rome had no such motive for anticipating the season of those privations which belong to Lent; for, from the earliest antiquity, she kept the Saturdays in Lent (and as often during the rest of the year as circumstances might require) as fasting days. At the close of the sixth century, St. Gregory the Great alludes, in one of his homilies, to the fast of Lent being less than forty days, owing to the Sundays which come during that holy season.

It was, therefore, after the pontificate of St. Gregory, that the last four days of Quinquagesima week were added to Lent, in order that the number of fasting days might be exactly forty. As early, however, as the ninth century, the custom of beginning Lent on Ash Wednesday was of obligation in the whole Latin Church. All the manuscript copies of the Gregorain Sacramentary which bear that date, entitle this Wednesday *In capite jejunii*,

that is to say, the beginning of the fast; and Amalarius, who gives us every detail of the liturgy of the ninth century, tells us that it was, even then, the rule to begin the fast four days before the first Sunday of Lent. We find the practice confirmed by two Councils, held in that century (Meaux and Soissons).

Peter of Blois, who lived in the twelfth century, tells us what was the practice in his days. He says: "All religious begin the fast of Lent at Septuagesima; the Greeks, at Sexagesima; the clergy, at Quinquagesima; and the rest of Christians, who form the Church militant on earth, begin their Lent on the Wednesday following Quinquagesima." The secular clergy, as we learn from these words, were bound to begin the Lenten fast somewhat before the laity; though it was only by two days – that is, on Monday, as we gather from the Life of St. Ulric, bishop of Augsburg, written in the tenth century. The Council of Clermont, in 1095, at which Pope Urban II presided, has a decree sanctioning the obligation of the clergy to begin abstinence from flesh-meat at Quinquagesima.

This usage, however, soon became obsolete; and in the fifteenth century, the secular clergy, and even the monks themselves, began the Lenten fast, like the rest of the faithful, on Ash Wednesday.

There can be no doubt that the original motive for this anticipation – which after several modifications, was limited to the four days immediately preceding Lent – was to remove from the Greeks the pretext of taking scandal at the Latins, who did not fast fully forty days.

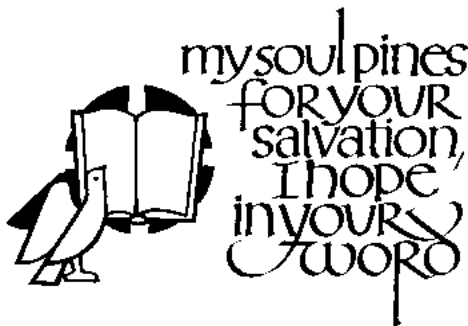
Thus it was that the Roman Church, by this anticipation of Lent by four days, gave the exact number of forty days to the holy season, which she had instituted in imitation of the forty days spent by our Savior in the desert. Whilst faithful to her ancient practice of looking on the Saturday as a day appropriate for penitential exercises, she gladly borrowed from the Greek Church the custom of preparing for Lent by giving to the liturgy of the three preceding weeks a tone of holy mournfulness. Even as early as the beginning of the ninth century, as we learn from Amalarius, the *Alleluia* and *Gloria in excelsis* were suspended in the Septuagesima Offices... Finally, in the second half of the eleventh century, Pope Alexander II enacted that the total suspension of the *Alleluia* should be everywhere observed, beginning with the Vespers of the Saturday preceding Septuagesima Sunday. This Pope was but renewing a rule already sanctioned, in that same century, by Pope Leo IX, and inserted in the body of Canon Law.

Thus was the present important period of the liturgical year, after various changes, established in the cycle of the Church. It has been there upwards of a thousand years...

The Mystery of Septuagesima

The season upon which we are now entering is expressive of several profound mysteries. But these mysteries belong not only to the three weeks which are preparatory to Lent: they continue throughout the whole period of time which separates us from the great feast of Easter.

The number *seven* is the basis of all these mysteries. We have already seen how the holy Church came to introduce the season of Septuagesima into her calendar. Let us now meditate on the doctrine hidden under the symbols of her liturgy. And first, let us listen to St. Augustine, who thus gives us the clue to the whole of our season's mysteries. "There are two times," says the holy Doctor: "one which is now and is spent in the temptations and tribulations of this life; the other which shall be then, and shall be spent in eternal security and joy. In figure of these, we celebrate two periods: the time before Easter, and the time after Easter, the blessedness of our future state...Hence it is that we spend the first in fasting and prayer; and in the second we give up our fasting, and give ourselves to praise."



The Church, the interpreter of the sacred Scriptures, often speaks to us of two places, which correspond with these two times of St. Augustine. These two places are Babylon and Jerusalem. Babylon is the image of this world of sin, in the midst whereof the Christian has to spend his years of probation; Jerusalem is the heavenly country, where he is to repose after all his trials. The people of Israel, whose history is but one great type of the human race, was banished from Jerusalem and kept in bondage in Babylon.

Now this captivity, which kept the Israelites exiles from Sion, lasted

seventy years; and it is to express this mystery, as Alcuin, Amalarius, Ivo of Chartres, and all the great liturgists tell us, that the Church fixed the number of seventy for the days of expiation. It is true, there are but sixty-three days between Septuagesima and Easter; but the Church, according to the style so continually used in the sacred Scriptures, uses the round number instead of the literal and precise one.



The duration of the world itself, according to the ancient Christian tradition, is divided into seven ages. The human race must pass through seven ages before the dawning of the day of eternal life. The first age included the time from the creation of Adam to Noah; the second begins with Noah and the renovation of the earth by the deluge, and ends with the vocation of Abraham; the third opens with this first formation of God's chosen people and continues as far as Moses, through whom God gave the Law; the fourth consists of the period between Moses and David, in whom the house of Juda received the kingly power; the fifth is formed of the years which passed between David's reign and the captivity of Babylon, inclusively; the sixth dates from the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, and takes us on as far as the birth of our Savior. Then finally, comes the seventh age; it starts with the rising of this merciful Redeemer, the Sun of justice, and is to continue till the dread coming of the Judge of the living and the dead. These are the seven great divisions of time; after which, eternity.

In order to console us in the midst of the combats, which so thickly beset our path, the Church, like a beacon shining amidst the darkness of this our earthly abode, shows us another seven, which is to succeed the one we are now preparing to pass through. After the Septuagesima of mourning, we shall have the bright Easter with its seven weeks of gladness, foreshadowing the happiness and bliss of heaven. After having fasted with our Jesus, and suffered with Him, the day will come when we shall rise together with Him, and our hearts shall follow Him to the highest heavens; and then after a brief interval, we shall feel the Holy Ghost descending upon us, with His seven Gifts. The celebration of all these wondrous joys will take us seven weeks, as the great liturgists observe in their interpretations of the rites of the Church. The seven joyous weeks from Easter to Pentecost will not be too long for the future glad mysteries, which, after all, will be but figures of a still gladder future, the future of eternity.

Having heard these sweet whisperings of hope, let us now bravely face the realities brought before us by our dear mother the Church. We are sojourners upon this earth; we are exiles and captives in Babylon, that city which plots our ruin. If we love our country, if we long to return to it, we must be proof against the lying allurements of this strange land, and refuse the cup she proffers us, and with which she maddens so many of our fellow captives. She invites us to join in her feasts and her songs; but we must unstring our harps, and hang them on the willows that grow on her river's bank, till the signal be given for our return to Jerusalem (Ps. 125). She will ask us to sing to her the melodies of our dear Sion: but how shall we, who are so far from home, have heart to "sing the song of the Lord in a strange land" (Ps. 136)? No there must be no sign that we are content to be in bondage, or we shall deserve to be slaves forever.

These are the sentiments wherewith the Church would inspire us during the penitential season which we are now beginning. She wishes us to reflect on the dangers that beset us; dangers which arise from ourselves and from creatures. During the rest of the year she loves to hear us chant the song of heaven, the sweet Alleluia; but now, she bids us close our lips to this word of joy, because we are in Babylon.

The leading feature, then, of Septuagesima, is the total suspension of the *Alleluia*, which is not to be again heard upon the earth until the arrival of that happy day, when having suffered death with our Jesus, and having been buried together with Him, we shall rise again with Him to a new life (Col. 2:12).

The sweet hymn of the angels, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, which we have sung every Sunday since the birth of our Savior in Bethlehem, is also taken from us; it is only on the feasts of the saints which maybe kept during the week that we shall be allowed to repeat it...

That the eye, too, may teach us that the season we are entering on is one of mourning, the Church will vest her ministers (both on Sundays and during the week which are not feasts of saints) in the somber purple. Until Ash Wednesday, however, she permits the deacon to wear his dalmatic, and the subdeacon his tunic; but from that day forward, they must lay aside these vestments of joy, for Lent will then have begun, and our holy mother will inspire us with the deep spirit of penance, by suppressing everything of that glad pomp, which she loves, at other seasons, to bring into the sanctuary of her God.

Practice during Septuagesima

...the Christian who would spend Septuagesima according to the spirit of the Church, must make war upon that false security, that self-satisfaction, which are so common to effeminate and tepid souls, and produce spiritual barrenness. It is well for them, if these delusions do not insensibly lead them to the absolute loss of the true Christian spirit. He that thinks himself dispensed from that continual watchfulness, which is so strongly inculcated by our divine Master, is already in the enemy's power. He that feels no need of combat and of struggle in order to persevere and make progress in virtue (unless he have been honored with a privilege which is both rare and dangerous), should fear that he is not even on the road to that kingdom of God which is only to be won by violence. He that forgets the sins which God's mercy has forgiven him, should fear lest he be the victim of a dangerous delusion. Let us, during these days which we are going to devote to the honest unflinching contemplation of our miseries, give glory to our God, and derive from the knowledge of ourselves fresh motives of confidence in Him, who, in spite of all our wretchedness and sin, humbled Himself so low as to become one of us, in order that He might exalt us even to union with Himself. **XXX**



As the sufferings
of Christ
abound in us +
so also through
Christ.
Does our
comfort abound

Holiness for the Laity

Summary of Father Korte's February 19th talk to Una Voce – Springfield Area

We were very blessed to have Father Korte speak to us about growing in holiness. He challenged us to become more diligent in growing closer to God, and was very practical in his suggestions, most of which are well within the capabilities of our daily living.

Holiness is a vocation which we obtain from our Baptism. The word vocation means to be called. We laity are all called to be in this world but not of this world. We must be holy right down to the last whisker, as Father put it.

Holiness is faithfulness – to our Baptismal promises and to practices time-honored by the Church for advancing in the spiritual life. We cannot go to heaven unless we are saints. Either we do it in this life, Father said, or we will be cleansed in purgatory where we can neither merit nor demerit, and others will have to obtain the cleansing for us. This is because nothing unclean can enter heaven.

We are called to punch holes in the darkness. This is what being the light of the world means. We do this by witnessing to the teachings of Christ in everyday life, by living what Jesus taught. True devotion perfects whatever we do. If we do everything for Christ, our daily actions at work or play become perfected in Him.

Holiness is prayer and work and formation, Father told us. He gave the example of how every Tuesday morning he spends time with his spiritual director in formation to be a better priest. Father said, "Holiness without prayer is vapid. Holiness without mortification is weak. Without doctrine, all this is pure sentimentality." What we are after is training of the will, not feel-good activities.

The two wings of the spiritual life are prayer and mortification. These are the practical things we do to grow in the love of God and love of neighbor.

Father said that we must make a concrete resolution at the end of every sermon and retreat. This resolution is something we are going to do to co-operate more fully with God's grace. Father emphasized also that we must have a **written plan**, and we must go over it frequently. He enumerated the following things:

Go to confession frequently. **Once a week is not too much.** Father said we must keep our priests busy hearing confessions. Then we will not have to complain that they are not spending time hearing confessions.

Go to Holy Communion frequently – preferably daily if possible.

Get a pen and write on the calendar: First Saturday: confession. Keep First Fridays and First Saturdays.

Each day make the Morning Offering: "O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer Thee my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Thy Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, the holy souls in purgatory, the reunion of all Christians, and the intentions of our Holy Father."

Ask yourself, do I give my first and last thought of the day to God? Pray while falling asleep and

immediately upon awakening.

Pray the Rosary every day. Carry a rosary with you and say it frequently throughout the day, such as when you are waiting for something or someone, or when you have a spare moment between duties. Father mentioned that it is ok to say the Rosary and meditate on one mystery throughout if we are obtaining a deeper understanding of that particular mystery. It is possible for us to say many rosaries every day if we give up frivolous pastimes.

Spend 15 minutes alone in solitude with Our Lord each day. Talk to Him about whatever you wish, but shut off the television, the radio, the CD player, and listen to Him. If everything around us is noisy, how can we concentrate on God?

Examine your conscience every evening, spending 2 minutes on this task.

Chose 3 things you will mortify yourself with at each meal. Mortification subdues the body which is given to concupiscence due to original sin and is absolutely necessary to grow in holiness. We do not have to do big things, but rather little things that others probably will not notice. In fact, it is better if others do not notice. Father gave some examples: give up salting your food at meals. Take only one helping at meals. Eat the food put in front of you whether you like it or not. Take your coffee without sugar if you like sugar. Other mortifications he mentioned: obey your superiors (parents) immediately and cheerfully. Do your chores without waiting to be told. Don't complain about anything. Do every mortification for the love of Jesus. Look for opportunities to mortify yourself. Many possibilities occur throughout each day. Father also mentioned that we should not say out loud what we are going to do during Lent for mortification because Satan will hear and then will tempt us intensely to break our resolutions.

Father told us we will never become holier by waiting for the right moment to start working on our plan. **“Do it now,”** he said. Go home and write it down. This includes the children. How many of us did this after the meeting or the next day? How many of us have not yet written down our plan? **XXX**

From the President...



Family Fair was poorly attended this year. A combination of the construction mess along with a white-out snow storm brought only about 50 % of the usual traffic. Yet we were able to encourage people and spread the Faith to those who did come by our booth to talk and ask questions. We plan to use left-over booklets and rosaries in other venues in the future. Many thanks to our members to generously took turns in the booth. Watch for special blessings from God for your work.

Pro-life Initiative

James E. Kramer started Our Lady's Army several years ago. The purpose was to get a million people praying the rosary regularly. Mr. Kramer has now asked for volunteers to pray a minimum of *one* 5 decade Rosary *per month* and include in your petitions “an end to abortion and contraception.” He already has members in 33 U.S. states and 12 foreign countries. Please pass this information along and sign up yourself at . If you want to know more about Jim's apostolate, you can reach him in New Jersey at 1-732-940-9031.

Lenten Mini-retreat

Credo of the Catholic Laity, a St. Louis based group of “Faithful Catholics, obedient to the Holy Father and the Bishops who teach in union with him, dedicated to preserving and promoting doctrinal orthodoxy and rubrical fidelity in the Church's public worship” will be sponsoring a retreat. **This is really special.** Father William Ashley, founder of Opus Mariae Mediatrix, a traditional Catholic organization for both clergy and laity, will be retreat master. He is the one who has set up the tradaa.org web-site in support of a world-wide Apostolic Administration for the Traditional Latin Mass. Father hails from Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada. The retreat will be held at the oldest Catholic church east of the Mississippi and west of the Alleghenies in Cahokia, Illinois, just across the river from St. Louis. This historic church was built in the late 1600s and has not one nail holding it together! Holy Family is also the oldest continuing Catholic Parish in the United States.

Father met with the Pope last October and will, no doubt, share something of the results of his discussion with the Pope. He is a deeply spiritual priest who will help us grow closer to Christ. Lunch will be served each day and is included in the price of the retreat, which is \$35. If anyone would like to attend the retreat but cannot afford the fee, please call Howard Brandt at 1-314-894-0357.

Directions to the old log church: Coming from Springfield, take I-44 through St. Louis and cross over the Poplar Street Bridge. You have many lanes, but watch for the ones marked "Cahokia", or Illinois Rt. 3. Go south about 3 ½ miles to Camp Jackson road, which is also Illinois Rt. #157. You will see two churches on your left. The one farthest east is the newer parish church. The other is the old log church.

The retreat is Friday, April 11 and Saturday, April 12, 2003. Each day there will be a Traditional Latin Mass at 9:30 a.m. Later in the day will be the Rosary and Benediction. Each day closes at 4:00. You will have opportunities for confession at specified times. To obtain a registration form, please call Howard Brandt, number listed above, or Vic Mercurio at 1-314-878-2067.

Father Gabet, F.S.S.P. scheduled for March Meeting

We are blessed to have our chaplain, Father Gabet, come in from Tulsa for our March meeting. He will be speaking about the Sacrament of Extreme Unction (Sacrament of the Sick), and how to help those in their final hours. Father gave a wonderful sermon at Mass in Tulsa on the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus (gone from the Novus Ordo Calendar) in January of this year in which he covered the power of the Holy Name at the hour of death. It was so refreshing to hear traditional Catholic teaching on this subject, we asked him to repeat his topic at our meeting. If you have elderly persons amongst your friends or relatives, you need to come to the March meeting. Please also remember to bring any water, salt, religious objects, etc. that you want blessed. As usual, Father will be ready, willing, and able to take care of our needs in this department. **XXX**



Barbara A. Schoeneberger

Excerpts from The Soul of the Apostolate

by Dom J.B. Chautard, O.C.R.

To live with oneself, within oneself; to desire self-control, and not allow oneself to be dominated by exterior things; to reduce the imagination, the feelings, and even the intelligence and memory to the position of servants of the will and to make this will conform, without ceasing, with the will of God: all this is a program that is less and less welcome to a century of excitement that has seen the birth of a new ideal: the love of action for action's sake.

Any pretext will serve, if we can only escape this discipline of our faculties: business, family problems, health, good reputation, patriotism, the honor of one's congregation, and the pretended glory of God, all vie with one another in preventing us from living within ourselves. This sort of frenzy for exterior life finally succeeds in gaining over us an attraction which we can no longer resist.

Is there any reason to be surprised, then, that the interior life is neglected?...

To give a precise idea of what a good work ought to be, let us quote a man whose apostolic work is the pride of his district, and recall the lessons he gave to us at the beginning of our priestly ministry. We were interested in the formation of a club for young men. Having visited the Catholic clubs of Paris and a few other French cities, the work going on at Val-des-Bois, and so on, we went to Marseilles to study the work done for Catholic youth by the saintly Father Allemand and the venerable Canon Timon-David. We rejoice to recall the emotions in our hearts (as a young priest) on hearing the latter speak as follows:

"Bands, theatricals, lantern-lectures, movies -- I do not condemn all that. When I started out, I too thought no one could do without them. And yet they are nothing but crutches, to be used when there is no alternative left. However, the further I advance, the more my end and my means become supernatural because I see more and more clearly that every work built upon a merely human foundation is bound to collapse, and that only the work that aims at bringing men closer to God by the interior life is blessed by Providence."

"Our band instruments have been relegated to the attic for a long time, and our stage has become useless, and yet the work is going on better than ever before. Why? Because, thanks be to God, my priests and I see much clearer and straighter than before, and our faith in the action of Christ and of grace has increased a hundred per cent."

"Take my advice, do not be afraid to aim as high as you possibly can, and you will be astonished at the

results. Let me explain: do not merely have, as your ideal, to give the youth a selection of clean amusements that will turn them aside from illicit pleasures and dangerous associations, nor simply to give them a Christian varnish, through routine attendance at Mass, or the reception of the Sacraments at long intervals and with questionable dispositions.”

“Launch out into the deep. Let your ambition be, first of all, the noble one of making a certain number of them, at any cost, take the firm resolution of living as fervent Christians; that is, of making their mental prayer every morning, going to Mass every day, if they can, and doing a little spiritual reading, besides going frequently to Communion, and fervently, too. Put all your efforts into giving this select group a great love for Jesus Christ, the spirit of self-denial, prayer, vigilance over themselves; in a word, solid virtues. And take no less trouble to develop in their souls a hunger for the Holy Eucharist...”

Man is weak and without constancy. If he neglects his spiritual life, he soon loses the taste for it. Absorbed in material duties, he gets to take satisfaction in them. But on the other hand, if the interior spirit gives signs of its latent vitality by pain and repugnance, the ceaseless complaints that issue from a wound that refuses to close, even in the midst of intense activity, these sufferings will themselves make up all the merit of our sacrificed contemplation. Rather, it is in this that the soul realizes the admirable and fruitful union of the interior and active lives. Maddened by the thirst for the interior life, a thirst which there is no time to quench, the souls returns as soon as possible to the life of prayer. Our Lord will never fail to make room for a few moments’ colloquy. But he demands that we be faithful to these opportunities, and gives us grace to make up, by our fervor, for the brevity of these happy moments.

The Soul of the Apostolate is a spiritual classic, written in the late 1800s and available through TAN books, 1-800-437-5876. Give one to your favorite priest for Lent. XXX

Book Review

A year ago I found an excellent book while on retreat at the Clear Creek Monastery in Oklahoma. It is: *Seeking Spiritual Direction -- How to Grow the Divine Life Within* by Father Thomas Dubay, S.M. and published by Servant Publications in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I purchased it for myself through Amazon.com. Some of you may remember seeing Father Dubay on EWTN. Father Dubay has done an excellent job outlining for the average person how to go about either getting a spiritual director or directing oneself. He answers basic questions such as: What is spiritual direction? Do I need Spiritual Direction? Can I direct myself? How can I Continue to Grow? He tells how to select a spiritual director if one is fortunate enough to obtain one, and what to expect. He speaks of problems that come up in spiritual direction, the role of prayer, and how to assess one’s progress. He also covers practical problems in spiritual direction and specific things to avoid. Since most of us are frightfully on our own in this area, Father Dubay’s book could be of great benefit and a good start toward a holier life. It would also be a good book for priests to read who may be willing to undertake spiritual direction.

Many people think spiritual direction is only for saints. The saints would tell you they are sinners. So spiritual direction is for everyone who wants to come closer to God and live in greater and greater charity towards everyone. B.A.S. XXX

