

Lent's the time to renew your Friendship with God!

If someone asked why you're giving up things for Lent ... coke, coffee, candy, cigs ... why you're reading spiritual books and giving up meat on Fridays ...
... why you're going to weekday Mass and the Stations of the Cross ...
what would you tell them?

Why are you doing those things? What do you hope to gain out of it?

A short and simple and very correct **answer** might be:

*"I want to renew my friendship with God!"
or "I want to build my friendship with God!"*

You know we're frequently asked if we have ... a relationship with God?

Many Protestants will freely ask: *Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?*

And **the right answer** would surely be, *"Yes, I do have a relationship with Jesus."*

But I've never heard anyone ask: *"How's your friendship with God?"*
Or *"Do you have a friendship with Jesus?"*

Think about it ... **there's a difference** between relationship and **friendship**!

You can have a relationship with the **Mailman**, the **Doorman**, the **Garbageman**,
the people who prepare your taxes, manage your money, serve you in Restaurants,
clean your teeth, work at your company, and sit next to you in Church.

But do you have ... a friendship ... with them?

Do you think of them and talk to them **outside** of a **specific encounter** you might
have with them for shopping or business or work or worship?

Is the bond you have with them **so strong** that ...
you'd enjoy having dinner with them ... or even going on vacation with them!

I think you can see that **not every relationship** includes a friendship.
Friendship implies relationship ... but **relationship** does not imply friendship.

So how about your relationship with God?

Is your relationship a friendship?

Do you think of Him outside of Church? **Do you talk to Him** during the day?

Ask yourself, *"Do I look forward to having dinner with Jesus?"*

And too, *"Am I looking forward to taking a long vacation with Him?"*

If so ... that would indicate a friendship.

And **friendship** is exactly what God wants to have with us!

Friendship involves relationship ... but friendship means so much more.

God wants ... the more ... God want's friendship with us, His Creatures!

We see this clearly in Salvation History in the way that God continued to pursue us ... even after we gave Him every reason to wash his hands of us and be rid of us.

In our **First Reading** from **Genesis**, we hear how **God** almost washed the whole world of us, but spared Noah and his family. And then God makes a mighty promise to Noah and establishes the Rainbow as a sign of His promise.

The word **God** uses for His Promise is the word “**Covenant**”.

In fact, in the **8 verses** of this reading, **God** used the word “covenant” 5 times!

And **God** goes on to use this word repeatedly in the Bible to describe his relationship with us ... a relationship that He wanted to blossom into a friendship ... the very friendship He had with Adam and Eve in the Garden before they sinned.

What exactly is a covenant?

A **Covenant** is the very special bond ...

it is a holy family bond that establishes a sacred kinship ...
and a **divine friendship!**

God's plan from all eternity was that **we should all be united with Him in a close family bond**, with the **royal dignity** of being a member of His Holy Household so that we'd get to participate in the love that the Father has for His Son Jesus!

So, after the Great Flood God started to gather man into his family by establishing a series of covenants ... each encompassing a larger and larger group of people.

Around **1800 BC**, **God** established a covenant with the **Tribes of Abraham**.

And **the sign** of the Covenant was **male circumcision**.

Around **1200 BC**, **God** established a covenant with the **Nation of Moses**.

And **the sign** of the Covenant became **the Passover Meal**.

In **1000 BC**, **God** established a covenant with the **Kingdom of David**.

And **the sign** of that covenant was **the Throne**.

And then in **33 AD**, God established a **covenant** with the **followers of Jesus**.
And the sign of the covenant was the Holy Eucharist!

Jesus established **this sign** at the **Last Supper** when He said,
“This is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant.”

This is a **very special sign** because, it is none other than **Jesus Himself!**

And **when Jesus** said, *“Do this in memory of me”* He gave **His Apostles the power to bring forth the sign** ... of **His very Body and Blood** veiled in Bread and Wine ... **over and over again ... until the end of time!**

So, unlike the sign of the **Rainbow**, that you might see randomly only a handful of times in your life ... **the Eucharist** is present in every Mass that is prayed!

And unlike the **Passover meal** that the **Jews** celebrate once a year,
the **Eucharist** is available **every day** of the year!

In the **Prayer of Consecration** the Priest repeats the very words that **Jesus** used at the **Last Supper** when He said,

*“This is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant,
which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

Here **Jesus** gives us the **sacred sign of His love and friendship** ...
His very own Body and Blood ...

How did we get access to this Sign? Through the Death of Jesus.

Yes, Jesus offered up His Body ... and **Jesus** poured out His Blood ...
for the **redemption** of the whole world.

And in doing this, He fulfilled His own definition of what it means to be “Friend”
which He revealed when He said:

“Greater love than this no man has than to give up his life for his friend.”

So Friendship involves self-giving and sacrifice ... **2 important practices of Lent!**

Jesus is certainly our Friend ... He proved that when He gave **His life** for us ...
and **the question He has for us is**: *“are we **Friends** with Him?”*

Remember, Friendship is way more than relationship!

And it's **friendship with Jesus** that we seek to deepen during this **Lenten Season**.

Our Friendship with God began on the day of our **Baptism ... that's **the day** we moved from being a slave to being a son (or daughter) of God!**

Yes, through the waters of **Baptism we entered into **God's Family**.**

St. Peter references this in his **Letter today when he points out how **God** patiently waited for **Noah** to build the Ark whereby **a few persons**, 8 in all, were saved through water. And **then** he says, "*This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.*"**

We enter into **Friendship with God in **Baptism**.**

And then we get to renew and build **that Friendship** by worthily receiving: His **Mercy** in **Confession** ... and His **Strength** in **Holy Communion**.

The **Eucharist** is **the Sign** of **God's eternal Friendship** with us.

It is **an efficacious sign** in that helps us be **Friends** with Him.

In our human weakness, we need the **supernatural strength of God** to fend off the **temptations** of the Devil, who wants nothing more than to ruin our Friendship w/ God.

Satan is very bold. **Notice the arrogance** he had to tempt even **Jesus** in the desert. That gives us **every surety** that he will tempt us too. We have to be strong to resist his **loys** and we do this by arming ourselves with **Jesus Himself**.

Let's treasure **the Covenant bond** we have with God ... He loves us and desires **Friendship** with us!

Realize that **the new and eternal covenant** was established ...
not at **His birth** ... but at **His death!**

So in Lent we meditate on this and allow it to deepen **our love** for God ...
and **our desire** for having **friendship** with Him.

So, what's the point of all your **Prayers** and **Penances** this **Lent**?

It's to renew and grow **your Friendship** with God!

Now's the time to think of Him more ... talk to Him more ... and visit Him more!

Stay strong on the journey and you will look forward to ...
every Mass where you get have **dinner** with Him ...

and one day taking a vacation with Him ... **an Eternal Vacation** in **Heaven!**

