

In the Gospel, Jesus is revealing to us that we have an **interior life**. That there is a place within each one of us that is “hidden,” a place that is visible to the Father alone. Jesus knows that we often live our lives on the outside, worrying about what others think of us, or consuming our lives with external activities (even good ones!). But ultimately, all of that leaves us unfulfilled. Jesus is showing us that we can ground our life in something else, in Someone Else: His Father. And the Father sees everything “in secret” not because He wants to zap us when we do something wrong, but because He wants to be in an intimate relationship with us, a relationship that is hidden to the eyes of the world. A relationship even hidden in some sense to our own eyes (no one can see one’s own soul!). But that’s where the Father dwells, and that’s the place we need to live from, from our relationship with Him. If we’re honest with ourselves, sometimes we can go a whole day living “on the outside” and not even think about God, or live from our relationship with Him.

Lent comes from the word *lencten*, meaning “springtime.” A time of renewal, blossoming of new life, and growth. This is strange because, right now, if you walk outside, it looks like anything but spring: there are no flowers, no green grass, barren trees... But if a tree could talk, and if you went up to it and asked, “What are you doing?” it would reply, “I’m living my interior life. I’m living a life that is hidden to the outside world. And my interior life is keeping me alive in this time of winter.” That’s literally what trees are doing! Those trees know somehow that there is a time each year for them to shed all that is not essential to their mission for a period of time, and focus on their interior life, and live completely by their interior life, so that they can grow and bear more fruit when the days become longer and the temperature is warmer.

This is the analogy for our life. Lent a time to reclaim our interior life, to shed the externals (the things we give up) that aren’t necessary for our mission (to become saints) and to strengthen our relationship with God and live more from Him so that we too can grow and, when Easter comes (about the same time flowers start blooming and trees begin turning green), you and I too can bear new fruit.

May we have a good Lent. And by that I mean may we have a challenging Lent, to really push ourselves. With a little effort, and a lot of grace, we just might come out of this season a little holier than when we began.