

Eighth Sunday In Ordinary Time – Feb. 18/19, 2017 – Pre-Lenten Talk

In cities and towns all over Florida and Arizona, baseball's annual ritual of hope and renewal where vets get reacquainted and rookies try to crack the lineup is underway ... yes, it's Spring Training!

Baseball's an old game ... a difficult game ... maybe that's why they call it hardball! But, it still comes down to 3 basic skills:

THROW THE BALL

HIT THE BALL

CATCH THE BALL.

This week, the Church enters into the season called Lent, from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "spring", a time to prune away bad habits fallen into, dust off the cobwebs that have dulled our spiritual shine, and renew our commitment to fight the good fight, run the race, keep the faith. Being HOLY, which is what each of us is called to be, is an old struggle, a difficult task.

Yet, like baseball, it comes down to 3 basic skills:

KNOW THE LORD

LOVE THE LORD

SERVE THE LORD.

Now, ballplayers in the spring put themselves through all sorts of drills and calisthenics to hone the basic skills of baseball.

So too, in Lent, our Spring Training, the Church offers us 3 drills, 3 disciplines so that we can move to goodness and perfect those skills we'll need for holiness:

KNOW THE LORD - PRAYER ... so often we let prayer slide, and so the Lord and we can get to be strangers ... Lent offers us lotsa time to spend time with Our Lord: Mass Sundays (and every other day too); Stations of the Cross every Friday evening; Holy Week services; remembering to pray Grace before all our meals; spouses could pray together, hand-in-hand, before bed; read a spiritual book; learn and pray the Rosary ... prayer opens the ground of our hearts to receive the seed to know the Lord.

LOVE THE LORD - FASTING ... during Lent we sacrifice eating meat each Friday and, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, we eat only one full meal and that meatless ... maybe we could have in our families a weekly simple meal of bread and soup to identify with Jesus in His suffering on the Cross and in the hungry of the world. But, what about fasting from technology, even one night a week? You could have a weekly Blank-Screen Night and instead, read a book or play a game as a family. Fasting makes me a little hungry, hungry to love the Lord more ... and me less.

SERVE THE LORD - ALMSGIVING ... then, if I'm a little less self-centered, maybe I can care more about others as I put money for the poor in my Rice Bowl or donate to our St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry on March 5th and April 2nd ... maybe, as a family, we could volunteer on those Sundays to help the Society with food distribution from St.

Brigid Hall ... maybe I could have a spring cleaning at home and donate unneeded clothes and shoes to clothes boxes ... and maybe every day, I could take a ride in the ARK and do one Act of Random Kindness. Almsgiving opens me to be a little poorer and see how I might serve the Lord in serving the poor He loves.

In April, an umpire is gonna shout, "Play Ball!!", and a brand new baseball season'll be opened.

In April, the women at the tomb will find it empty and will shout to the Church, "He's Risen"!

Pray through the hard work and spring training of Lent, you'll be in the best shape ever, so you can take the field on the Lord's team and play the game of your life!!