

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given January 20, 2008
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time - Liturgical Year A

A few months ago, a man from the parish came to meet with me. He was married and had a good job and many friends – but – something was missing. He felt confused, overwhelmed, empty. He told me that he wasn't depressed or sick; his was a spiritual concern.

The man was wise, and his diagnosis sounded correct. We recalled together our spiritual nature. St. Ignatius, in the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises, states that we are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save our souls. The man thought this sounded individualistic and otherworldly, but it turns out he wasn't praising, reverencing, or serving God our Lord. He was busy about many other things and felt a spiritual malaise. He was living for himself, not for God or for his neighbor.

I asked him to pray, to read the Gospel, and to go to Mass to meet Christ in a new way. Several weeks later, he came in again and was better. He felt more spiritually connected.

Whatever benefit he received, I didn't save him; Christ did. Like Paul and John the Baptist, I pointed him toward Christ. From Christ, he received grace and peace. Grace is a gift of God to us, to rescue us from our helplessness and failure. And peace is essentially right relations with God – serenity – and allowing right relations with others.

We live in a world where the darkness of war is overtaking many places and where the darkness of spiritual illness is spreading. Christ, the Light of the World, wants to enlighten us with grace and peace – so that we can enlighten others by our testimony.

Lent is two weeks away – a time of grace and peace – a time to turn to Christ in a new or renewed way. As we gather for the Eucharist today, let's consider if some spiritual need exists in us and let us use Lent as an occasion to go to Christ to receive his grace and peace.

[Note: Fr. John gave this homily in 2008. In 2020, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26.]