

Eighth Sunday Ordinary Time – Year C – 2019  
Sirach 27.4-7 /// 1 Corinthians 15.54-58 /// Luke 6.39-45

→Every one of us seems to have our own preference for *the* ideal vacation spot.

→Some of us love going to the beach; while others prefer hiking the trails.

Some of us enjoy visiting large cities; while others like the quietness of camping in the woods.

→however one place that does *not* usually make a top destinations list is – the desert!

→yet in both the Old and New Testament there are many passages...

...that describe individuals and whole nations going into the desert at some time or another.

→we know well, that God called his chosen people into the desert to free them from...

...whatever *distracted* them from living and embracing his love and presence.

God often called people....prophets and apostles, preachers and disciples....even Jesus himself....into the desert so that he might save and deliver them.

→and perhaps today God is calling us – as individuals and as a parish community – into the desert as well...as we begin our Lenten season this week on Ash Wednesday.

PAUSE

→our parish Lenten theme this year is “*with grace and gladness...*”

→and it is perhaps *with grace and gladness* and God is calling *us* into the desert of our hearts,...

→...so that we can to make this Lent different from all previous Lents...

...and truly deepen our relationship with God.

[you know]...the common hallmarks of Lent are prayer, sacrifice, and almsgiving...

→Prayer is something we all need to do more and so....maybe this is the year, for us to decide to make a special effort to spend more time in prayer, more time reading the Scriptures, or reflecting on where we are in life, and more importantly where we want to go....

→a second hallmark is that of sacrifice...

→to sacrifice means to go without something ....usually for the sake of a better cause.

→there are so many things we sacrifice throughout our lives...parents sacrifice time and sleep to take care of their children,

→young people might have to sacrifice having fun in order to improve their studies or better themselves in sports.

→and all of us will usually sacrifice our time and desires for others who we care about, or for someone close to us in need.

→the Church has always taught that sacrifice is good for the body, mind and soul.

→and during Lent we are asked to sacrifice in a number of common ways

--first by fasting from food on – Ash Wednesday and Good Friday –

--by abstaining from meat on the Friday's of Lent.....and by personally giving something up for Lent that we like or enjoy.

→the purpose of this type of sacrifice....is to encourage us to get closer to God during this time...

→...and to create a space in our soul where God can fill it with His very presence.

PAUSE

→and finally, the third hallmark of Lent is almsgiving.....—the giving to those in need....to those less fortunate than ourselves...to those who might lack even the basic necessities of life.

→this hallmark is of particular importance in our Lenten journey as we participate in the 2019 Bishop's Appeal which is already underway and officially begins next weekend here in Church.

→As you well know, the annual Bishop's Appeal is the primary source of funding for Catholic Charities in our diocese....which remains the largest non-government social agency in our area

→the Appeal also supports many of the diocesan offices and ministries that are such an important part of the Church's mission.

→Because of your generosity to the Bishop's Appeal last year...just in Trumbull County alone

- ✓ Over 1500 people received emergency food assistance;
  - ✓ 2,400 received utility assistance;
  - ✓ Over 300 pregnant women received assistance through the First Step for Change program
  - ✓ And over 14,000 meals were delivered to older adults and seniors
- just to name a few of the many services that were provided.

As you can see....your donation and support of last year's Appeal certainly

--... made a difference.....in continuing the compassionate ministry of Jesus for thousands of our needy neighbors, not only in Trumbull County but throughout Northeast Ohio.

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→this year....the need for Catholic Charities continues to increase

→the goal for this year's Bishop's Appeal, in addition to raising \$4million....is to increase our participation and response to include all Catholic households within the diocese.

→you can respond by first of all continuing to pray for the success of this year's appeal

→you can respond by donating...this year the recommended contribution is \$200 for the year....that is \$20.00 a month for 10 months or just \$5.00 a week.

→and you can respond by choosing to volunteer in any of the various ministries or organizations in our parish.

→Our goal is 100% participation – so it is important that we hear back from every household.

Our parish financial goal this year is \$43,636.00.

→In the past we have always exceeded our parish goal...and last year was no exception.

→last year our parish contributed \$43,900.00 with an average give being \$199.00 per parishioner...so thank you for your kindness and generosity

...and I am confident that we will be just as successful again this year.

→Some have already made their pledge to the Appeal...

...through the mailing you received a few weeks ago – →we already are over \$5000 in pledges from our parish and so I thank you for your response and generosity!

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→Next weekend, the opportunity to make a pledge to the Appeal will begin here in Church...or you can respond through the mailing received regarding the Bishops Appeal.

→as always,...your generosity, support and kindness to this endeavor is sincerely appreciated

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→We are just a few days away from our annual Lenten journey into the desert.

Through our prayer, sacrifice and almsgiving may this be a time to be... renewed in mind and recharged in spirit.

→may we go into the desert with Jesus...only to emerge ready to celebrate our Easter joy....

→and in whatever you might decide to do this Lent to deepen your relationship to God and one another...may it truly be done *with grace and gladness*....