

Good morning!

Friends, in today's Second Reading, St Paul provides us with the two laws of spiritual progress that, if we follow them, can assure our constant spiritual growth. These two laws are simple, and I know we are familiar with them already, but it is good to hear them enunciated: Each of us is called to die to sin and to live in God.

We are **to die to sin** – “You too must think of yourselves as dead to sin”

and

We are called **to live in God** -- “You too must think of yourselves... as living for God in Christ Jesus.”

Let's talk about these for a moment...

I recently learned something about the great Saint Benedict, the seventh-century monk who started the monastery movement in Europe. Well, the story is that as a young monk St. Benedict struggled with lust, with violent temptations against chastity. One day the temptations were so strong that even prayer couldn't seem to make them go away.

But he was determined to be faithful to God and God's commandments.

And so, to put an end to the temptation he **threw himself into a thorn-bush**, sure that the painful pricks of the thorns would distract him from the false promises of illicit pleasures. And they did.

And, after winning that spiritual battle, it seems that God gave him a special grace to never experience those types of temptations ever again.

To die to sin means that we will fight the battle against our bad habits, our sinful tendencies, be it lust, greed, pride or whatever. Friends, we must fight the battle daily and we need do our best to do **whatever it takes** to remain faithful to God and his commandments... And when we really, really try to die to sin, God gives us the victory and the grace to grow in virtue...

Let me mention here that **the Sacrament of Confession** can help us greatly in this our attempt **to die to sin**.... This sacrament for one thing helps us to not fool ourselves that we are without sin: the fact is we all fall short of God's plan for us in one way or another and the Sacrament helps us to see our sins more clearly. And also, very importantly, in participating in the sacrament we receive much-needed grace to combat sin in our life.

If you have not been to Confession in a while, please think about it, as you seek to follow this dictum of St. Paul... **die ... to ... sin**....

Now, **to live in God** can mean so many things but let me just share the insight of our first reading today, where the prophet Elisha encounters the old woman. What we see in this scene is her **great hospitality**. And we know that in the ancient world hospitality was not merely being nice: hospitality could at times mean the difference between life and death. Hospitality was thus a very important practice in the ancient world.

And the woman extended her hospitality to Elisha expecting nothing in return. And she didn't limit her hospitality to just a few meals: she prepared a place for Elisha to stay when he was in town.

And what we see from that reading is that in serving God's prophet, the woman was serving the Lord. You know, when we serve those who do God's work, we serve the Lord.

And what happened? Well, the Lord **rewarded** her: through her selfless sacrifice, she and her family received new life with the promise of a son.

Friends, in His great love for us God always rewards us for our good works, and **to live in God** means to experience the richness of that which He seeks to give to us.

Die to sin... even if you have to throw yourself into a thornbush

Let the Sacrament of Confession **help** you to die to sin

Live in God by serving others in important ways

And you shall be richly rewarded.

God bless you.