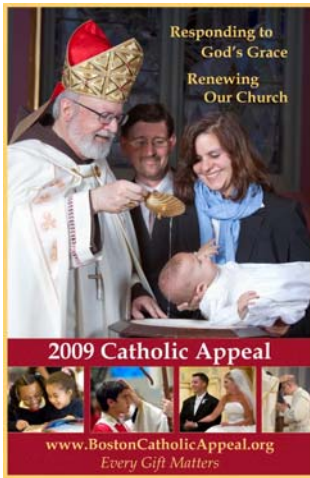


2009 Catholic Appeal DVD – Launch Weekend

2nd Sunday of Lent; March 7-8, 2009

Homily - Cardinal Seán O'Malley



In 1999, I organized a priests' retreat in the Holy Land. It is the only time I have ever been there, and it was a most moving experience to visit Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Mount Calvary. But, I will never forget my visit to Mount Tabor, the mountain of the transfiguration described in today's Gospel. The group left the retreat house on the Mount of the Beatitudes and traveled toward Mount Tabor. When the bus got to the bottom of the hill, we were ushered off the bus and into some vintage taxi cabs that were piloted by kamikaze drivers who took us up the winding roads and hairpin curves toward the top of the mountain where there is a Church built on the spot of the Transfiguration. When we finally arrived, I felt like St. Peter, and I wanted to kiss the ground and shout, "How good it is to be here! Let's build some tents and stay here because I am never getting back in that cab."

The geography of Lent begins in the desert on the first Sunday of Lent; the second Sunday finds us climbing a mountain to be closer to God, to leave behind the noise and the sights that distract us and prevent us from seeing God. Lent is to rescue us from the narcotic of our routine and the "busyness" of every day life. On the mountain far from their fishing boats and nets, far from the crowds and their apostolic work, the Apostles, Peter, James and John are alone with the Lord. Suddenly, they glimpse Christ's glory, the inner reality of the life with the Father and the Spirit, manifest in the voice of the Father who tells them: "This is my Beloved Son, listen to Him." The presence of the Spirit is made visibly in the cloud that cast a shadow over them.

It was only an instant, but it was so important to Peter, James and John. Their lives would not be the same. They had seen God. The Apostles would refer back to this vision on the mountain the rest of their lives.

The vision passes quickly, and then as the Gospel says, they saw "no one but Jesus." But the experience sharpened their perception and appreciation of the mystery. Lent is about making time and space for God in our lives so that we can glimpse Jesus' glory and so we can truly listen to the Beloved Son, listen to His Gospel, His message about why we are here and how we should live our lives.

It is good for us to be here, to be together at Mass. Jesus has invited us just as He invited Peter, James and John. God wants us to hear His beloved Son and to experience the power of His love.

The Lord has given us a task, a mission to make a better world, to build a civilization of love. It is here gathered around the altar that we truly become Christ's family. When I think of my own childhood, I recall our dinner table where we all had to be there, with my parents, the children and our nana who lived with us after my grandfather died. We had to be there on time to pray grace, and no one could leave until my Dad gave us permission. At the time I often felt it was an imposition, and I would rather have been playing a game or doing something else. But now, as I look back, I am so grateful for the experience of those meals that forged us into a family with bonds that were unbreakable, where we learned to put up with each, to listen to each other, to be nourished by each other's presence and where we learned who we were as a family and what was important in life.

The shortest book in the world is the Irish cookbook, many a boiled dinner. But it wasn't about food; it was about being a family and having a claim on each other.

For us Catholics, the altar is our family table where Christ gathers us so that we can listen to His words, eat His Body and be His family. Our very presence is a sign, a witness to each other that we want to be a member of Christ's family, the Church.

In the Book of Genesis we hear the story of Abraham and how God put him to the test ordering him to sacrifice his only son, the son of the promise, the child of his old age. Because he is willing to sacrifice what was most precious to him, God spares Abraham's son and blesses Abraham and his descendants.

At times our Faith is tested, but if we remain faithful, God will not be outdone in generosity. If we truly believe, we will persevere on the journey and receive the blessing.

Lent is a special time to focus on our spiritual journey, our relationship with God, with our family, with our community. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Saint Paul writes about the collections taken up at the Sunday Eucharist at the time of the Apostles. It was so that the community could care for widows and orphans and feed those who were hungry and to be able to carry on the mission of spreading the Gospel.

Jesus has much to say about money in the Gospels. If we are too attached to material things, money and possessions become false gods that prevent us from worshiping our Heavenly Father and serving our brothers and sisters.

This Lent, I invite all of you to join me in supporting our Catholic Appeal. This is the way we are able to make a sacrifice in faith and love that will allow the Catholic Community to carry on the mission that Christ has entrusted to us. These are challenging economic times, and we are truly grateful to all of you who freely give to support the works of mercy and the proclamation of the Gospel by our Catholic community. In your church today, you will find information packets with brochures that describe all the shared ministries that you support through gifts to the Annual Appeal.

One of the characteristics of the Faith community from the pages of the New Testament up to the present is the willingness of the Catholic Community to share our resources with those in need and to support the crucial task of teaching the Gospel and making disciples of all nations. I am visiting your parishes today during this holy season of Lent to invite you once again to support the mission of the Catholic Church by participating in our annual appeal.

The Japanese have a wonderful parable I often share with our young people. They tell of a wealthy man who lived in a beautiful mansion on the top of a mountain. Each day this man used to go out for a walk in his garden and to gaze at the sea below. One day as he was out walking, he spied a huge tsunami on the horizon rushing toward the shore. Then he saw a group of his neighbors picnicking on the beach. He wanted to warn them so he began to shout and wave his arms, but they were too far away and could not see nor hear him. So you know what that man did? He went into his beautiful home and set it on fire. When his neighbors saw the smoke and flames, some said, "Let's climb the mountain to help our neighbor save his home." The others replied: "The mountain is so steep, and we are having so much fun, you go." Well, the ones who climbed the mountain to help their neighbors were saved. Those who stayed on the beach, having fun perished when the wave hit the shore.

Sometimes when we perform a work of mercy or make a gift to the community, we think we are doing God a favor, and we congratulate ourselves. In reality, we are climbing the steep mountain that leads to God's sacrificial love and safety. The burning house on the mountain is the cross where Jesus died for us. If we climb the mountain this Lent, we will one day glimpse the dazzling transfigured Christ, and like Peter, we will say, "How good it is to be here."

Pastor's Witness – Msgr. Frank Strahan, Pastor, St. Bridget in Framingham

Hello, I'm Msgr. Frank Strahan, Pastor of St. Bridget's Parish in Framingham. I come to you today representing pastors across the Archdiocese in joining with Cardinal Seán to ask for your support of the 2009 Catholic Appeal.

Our Church spans the entire world, with more than one billion people across the globe calling themselves Catholic. Locally, our faith family consists of Catholics from 292 parishes, those who worship in numerous chapels, on college campuses, or in medical centers across the 144 cities and towns that comprise the Archdiocese of Boston. Together, we are close to 2 million strong.

Because of our size, we have many ministries that are best accomplished centrally. Many of these ministries are housed at the new Pastoral Center in Braintree. These ministries supplement or support the work done in our parishes to:

Hand on our faith to young Catholics and converts,

Support priests, seminarians, and all those that offer their lives to serve us,

Make our parishes, schools and agencies more effective through training and support services, and

Help coordinate many renewal initiatives that will benefit Catholics here and now, and for years to come.

Please take an information packet from your pews or from the back of the Church. The enclosed brochure has information about all the shared ministries we support through the Catholic Appeal. Please fill out the pledge form in the packet or the one you may have received in the mail.

On behalf of all priests in the Archdiocese, thank you for your prayers, support, friendship, and your generosity to the Church. God Bless you.

Lay Witness – Craig Gibson, St. Mary in Winchester

Hello, my name is Craig Gibson. My wife Nancy and I are parishioners at St. Mary's in Winchester. I would like to take a brief moment to share with you why we have been, and continue to be, supporters of the Catholic Appeal.

First of all, on behalf of Cardinal Seán, a special thanks to each and every one of you for your past support of the Appeal... as well as those who will consider supporting the Appeal for the first time this year. As some of you may know, the Appeal provides the vital **financial resources** necessary to fund over 60 life changing ministries here in our Archdiocese.

These ministries **touch and change the lives** of so many, by helping to hand on the faith to young and new Catholics, supporting priests, seminarians, and all those that offer their lives to serve us, and making our parishes, schools, and agencies more effective through training and support services.

Last year, almost 50,000 individuals and families participated in the Catholic Appeal, contributing over \$15 million dollars in support of Cardinal Seán and the effort he is leading to advance the mission of our local Church. Now more than ever, each of you are encouraged and invited, as members of our growing faith community to participate out of gratitude for God's gifts and blessings in your own lives.

Over the past few years, my wife, Nancy, and I have been **very committed** to the Appeal, **knowing** that it is the **life blood of support** for so many critical ministries throughout the Archdiocese. **Very simply, we invite you to join us and to participate this year as generously as your means allow.**

In the back of Church today, you will find Appeal information packets. The enclosed brochure has information about all the shared ministries we support through the Catholic Appeal. Please consider filling out the pledge form in the packet or the one you may have recently received in the mail.

Thank you and God bless you.