

- During the last 2 weeks of Lent, which we call Passiontide, our crucifixes as well as all of our saint statues are shrouded in violet cloth – hiding them as a means of intensifying our Lenten fasts by fasting even from the visual consolation the statues provide.
- I always love coming in here on Easter morning and seeing our heavenly friends looking down upon us once again. Seeing the saints brings joy to the heart!
- Yet, have you ever really considered the fact that God wants you to be a saint? In fact, God has created each of us for holiness, for sainthood.
- We exist, as the *Baltimore Catechism* teaches us, to know, love, and serve God in this life so that we may be happy with Him in the next.
- Yet, have you ever considered that the only people happy with God in the next life are saints?
- While not every soul in Heaven has been canonized and formally awarded the title of saint, every soul in Heaven is a saint in that they have been perfected and live in perfect union with God.
- There are no merely “good” people in Heaven. Everyone there is a saint, whether that be with an uppercase “S” or a lowercase “s.” For complete sinlessness – perfection – is what is necessary for us to be united with God forever.
- God and sin are mutually exclusive; they cannot exist together. Therefore, all sin within us must be purified before we can be with God, whether we’re purified through the fires of purgatory, or through our own prayer, fasting, and sacrifice.
- At the beginning of Lent, I mentioned that the great Cistercian abbot, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, once wrote that, “The capacity of any one’s soul is judged by the amount of love one possesses” (SBoC: *Song of Songs*, 27:10).
- His point was that, even though our souls are not material in nature, they have a spiritual capacity to expand or contract, and the more one practices the virtues – especially charity – the more the soul expands.
- And as the soul expands, the soul becomes a more spacious dwelling place for God, and consequently it takes on a greater likeness to God, and becomes holier.
- Throughout the past 40 days of Lent, we have taken on the soul-expanding exercises of prayer, fasting, and alms-giving. And in a particular way this Lent, I asked all of you on Ash Wednesday to make reparation for sin – our own and those of the whole world.
- When we make reparation for our sins, we cannot help but grow in charity, for doing so makes our relationship with God whole again – enabling us to love Him more fully.
- Our sins damage our relationship with God, and while our Lord so graciously forgives us whenever we ask for His forgiveness in the confessional, we must still make up for the injustice we have committed against Him by our sins by doing penance.
- When we make reparation for the sins of others humbly and with a generous heart, our souls expand greatly – for by doing this, we imitate well our Lord, Who with love and generosity beyond compare, gave Himself up to suffering and death so that our sins might be forgiven.
- Now as we celebrate this magnificent feast of Easter, we must ask ourselves if we are willing to continue this soul-expanding pursuit of holiness that we began in Lent.
- Will we continue growing in virtue and self-mastery, or will our old selves prevail?

- My friends, let us not waste the grace that we have received these past 40 days, and let us not waste the grace of Easter that we are now receiving! Instead let us allow the grace of Lent and Easter to continue transforming and sanctifying us!
- This process of personal transformation and sanctification began, though, not just with Lent, but with our baptism. And today is the day above all others when we should renew our commitment to living a life of holiness by living our baptismal promises.
- In fact, immediately after the homily, the Church includes a renewal of our baptismal promises as part of the Easter liturgy. And at that time, we will all make the promise to renounce sin so as to live in the freedom of God's children.
- We will renounce the lure of evil, and we will renounce Satan himself. And we will reaffirm all the central tenets of our Catholic faith.
- And this is Holy Mother Church's way of reminding us what the Christian life is all about. It's about turning away from the enticements of this world and the temptations of the devil, so that we might indeed live in the freedom of the children of God.
- The Christian life is about pursuing virtue and holiness so that, when we do come face to face with God at the end of our lives, He will immediately welcome us into His presence for all eternity.
- If we live this right life, Judgment Day doesn't have to be a bad day.
- And so, my dear friends in Christ, let us renew our baptismal promises with integrity of heart and firmness of will. Now that Easter is here, we must not slip back into lives of sin and indifference.
- Let us celebrate with joy this feast of our salvation. Let us honor our Lord, Who is both Priest and Victim, for His great work of redemption, but let us do so by living a life of genuine holiness that increases the love we bear in our souls.
- May our Lord bless all of you abundantly this Easter season! And may we all persevere on the path toward sainthood.