

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: Cycle "B"
Sunday, 18 February 2018

A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO ON RETREAT,
THE **RETREAT DIRECTOR** SPOKE ABOUT A SCIENTIST
NAMED **NICHOLAS STENSON**.

- THE SCIENTIFIC **WORLD REFERS** TO HIM AS **STENO**.
- HE WAS A YOUNG **DANISH PHYSICIAN** WHO, BY HIS LATE 20's,
HAD MADE REMARKABLE **DISCOVERIES**:
 - HE IDENTIFIED THE **PAROTID GLAND**, WHICH MAKES **SALIVA**,
AS WELL AS THE **TEAR DUCT**.
 - WHEREAS DESCARTES AND OTHERS
BELIEVED THE **HEART WAS A FURNACE ...**
STENO PROVED THAT IT WAS A **MUSCLE**.
- **STENO WAS ALSO FASCINATED** BY THE WORLD AROUND US;
HE WAS ESPECIALLY ENAMORED AT HOW **SEA SHELLS**
COULD BE FOUND AT **ALTITUDES WELL ABOVE SEA LEVEL ...**
A PURSUIT WHICH EARNED HIM THE TITLE *FATHER OF MODERN GEOLOGY*.

STENO WAS **RAISED** AS A **LUTHERAN** IN DENMARK.

- HE'D BEEN **TAUGHT** THAT
CATHOLICISM WAS A **CORRUPT** FORM OF CHRISTIANITY.
 - HOWEVER,
WHEN HE WAS DOING **GEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN ITALY**,
HE ENJOYED THE COMPANY OF A NUMBER OF **CATHOLICS**
WHO **DIDN'T FIT HIS STEREOTYPE** OF CATHOLICS.
 - **IN HIS SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH**, STENO:
 - **STUDIED THE BIBLE**, and
 - **READ** THE WRITINGS OF MANY **EARLY CHRISTIAN AUTHORS**, and
 - BECAME **CONVINCED** THAT
HIS **BIAS AGAINST CATHOLICISM WAS FLAWED & MISGUIDED**.
 - AND SO HE WAS **FACED WITH A CHALLENGING CONUNDRUM**;
HOW **COULD HE RECONCILE**
 - **LEAVING THE FAITH** IN WHICH HE'D BEEN **RAISED**, with
 - **HIS DESIRE FOR THE TRUTHS OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH**.
- AS STENO WAS **WALKING DOWN** THE STREET,
CONTEMPLATING HIS PREDICAMENT,
A **WOMAN SHOUTED** FROM THE WINDOW:
▶ **DO NOT WALK ON THAT SIDE OF THE STREET, SIR;
WALK ON THE OTHER SIDE**.
 - WHILE THE WOMAN'S INSTRUCTIONS
WERE DIRECTED AT SOMEONE ELSE ...
 - **STENO TOOK IT AS A DIVINE INSPIRATION**, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER
APPROACHED A PRIEST & ENTERED INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

TODAY, JESUS INVITES YOU & ME TO "GO TO THE OTHER SIDE!"

- HE SAYS TO EACH OF US "REPENT, AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL."
- THIS MIGHT LITERALLY INVOLVE OUR WALKING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET ... or SITTING IN A DIFFERENT PEW, or perhaps on the other side of the church.
- SUPPOSE THAT ONE SIDE OF THE STREET HAS A LIQUOR STORE, A TAVERN, AND A PASTRY SHOP; THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET HAS A LIBRARY, A BESTBUY, AND A COSTCO.
 - THE RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC OR ONE ON WEIGHT-WATCHERS, MIGHT DO WELL TO CROSS OVER & WALK BY THE LIBRARY;
 - I, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD DO WELL TO AVOID BOTH COSTCO & BESTBUY!
- WHILE THERE IS NO SIN IN WALKING PAST A TAVERN, A LIQUOR STORE, OR COSTCO ...
 - FOR SOME PEOPLE, JUST BEING IN PROXIMITY TO THEIR WEAKNESS IS ENOUGH TO ERODE THEIR RESOLVE & CAUSE THEM TO SIN: BETTER FOR THEM TO WALK ON THE OTHER SIDE.
 - STEPPING AWAY, CROSSING TO THE "OTHER SIDE", JOURNEYING OUTSIDE OF OUR "COMFORT ZONES" AND INTO THE DESERT WITH THE LORD IS THE ONLY REAL WAY TO PROPERLY FOCUS OURSELVES ON GOD!

ALTHOUGH I HATED PHILOSOPHY, I DID LEARN A FEW THINGS STUDYING IT:

- SOREN KIERKEGAARD SAID:
 - ▶ "PURITY OF HEART IS TO FOCUS ONE THING."
- THAT *ONE THING* WHICH OUGHT TO BE OUR FOCUS THIS LENT IS: THE LORD.
 - IN OUR RESOLVE AND DESIRE TO FOLLOW THE LORD, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE STEP AWAY FROM WHATEVER TEMPTS US.
 - SOMETIMES THAT RESOLVE BEGINS WITH MOVING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET, and STEERING CLEAR OF WHATEVER TEMPTS US IN THE FIRST PLACE.
 - AND WHEN WE'RE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET (or church) THINGS LOOK DIFFERENT – AND, from this alternative perspective, IT MIGHT JUST BE EASIER TO FOCUS ON THE LORD.
 - a few people have already commented about how different things look when sitting in the other nave; perhaps that different perspective might help you focus on the changes that the Lord is calling you to make in your life.

**THIS PAST WEDNESDAY,
MANY OF US RECEIVED AN ASHEN CROSS ON OUR FOREHEADS
AS WE HEARD THE WORDS:**

“TURN AWAY FROM SIN, AND BE FAITHFUL TO THE GOSPEL.”

- **THOSE WORDS REMINDED US THAT WE ALL NEED TO:**
 - **GET ON THE RIGHT TRACK;**
 - **LOOK FOR JESUS AND THE PEACE THAT ONLY HE CAN GIVE!**
- **BUT ... ONCE WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK, THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE STREET,
or IN A DIFFERENT PART OF THE CHURCH,
WE'RE NOT IMMUNE TO THE DEVIL'S TEMPTATIONS!**
 - **AS WE HEARD IN THE GOSPEL, THAT
THE DEVIL EVEN TEMPTED JESUS ... AS HE PRAYED IN THE DESERT.**
 - **YES, JESUS TRIUMPHED OVER THOSE TEMPTATIONS.**
 - **YOU AND I, NOT SO MUCH.**
 - **BUT THE TRUE MERCY OF GOD IS REVEALED IN THE FACT THAT
IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER:**
 - **HOW MANY TIMES WE'VE SUCCUMBED TO TEMPTATION
... but rather ... it's a matter of**
 - **HOW MANY TIMES WE'VE DEMONSTRATED A RENEWED RESOLVE TO
GET OURSELVES ON THE RIGHT PATH!!!!**

**LIKE NICOLAUS STENO,
WE GATHER HERE TODAY ASKING GOD TO GET US ON THE RIGHT PATH.**

- **FOR STENO, THAT RIGHT PATH:**
 - **LED NOT ONLY TO HIS RECEPTION INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, but it**
 - **INVOLVED HIS BEING ORDAINED A PRIEST, and later A BISHOP.**
- **IN 1988, POPE JOHN PAUL II
BEATIFIED THIS GREAT SCIENTIST.**

**AS WE'RE EARLY IN LENTEN JOURNEY,
WE SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED THAT OUR JOURNEY OF REPENTANCE
IS NOT UNLIKE THAT OF BLESSED STENO:**

- **HIS JOURNEY TO HOLINESS BLOSSOMED
WHEN AN INNOCENT INSTRUCTION TO CROSS THE STREET
SPARKED HIS DESIRE TO CROSS OVER TO THE LORD.**
- **TODAY, AND THIS WEEK, *WHAT WILL YOUR CROSSINGS SPARK?***
 - **KNOWING HOW THE LORD USED STENO'S INNOCENT
“CROSSING OF THE STREET”
TO SPARK PROFOUND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION GROWTH ...**
 - **HOW WILL YOU ALLOW THE LORD TO USE A PEW
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE,
OR IN THE OTHER NAVE OF OUR CHURCH,
AS A SPARK (or catalyst) FOR REPENTANCE & RENEWAL as did Steno?**