



5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Sexagesima Sunday)

February 8, 2026

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In secular culture today is Super Bowl Sunday. People are preparing to watch the game of the year—the two best teams in the nation going head-to-head to see who will lift the trophy and wear the ring. And nobody just stumbles into it. Even the fans prepare. There are pre-game activities, food, planning, anticipation. Something instinctual in the human experience tells us: when something important is coming, you get ready for it. Preparation and anticipation heighten the experience of whatever event we are doing.

The same is true for us as Catholics.

We know that Easter is coming—the greatest and highest of our feast days, the Resurrection of our Lord. And we know that the Church prepares us for it with the traditional forty days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that we call Lent. Lent is not a random season. It is the Church's ancient training ground: forty days to mortify the flesh, discipline the will, and sharpen the soul for the joy of the Paschal victory.

But there is also a companion tradition that developed later in the Latin Church that prepares us even before Lent begins: the season sometimes called Septuagésima, the “seventy days.”

This tradition begins with Lent's name: Quadragesima—forty. Then the Church backs up in tens: Quinquagesima (fifty), Sexagesima (sixty), and Septuagesima (seventy). Today, technically, is Sexagesima Sunday.

Now, anyone with a calendar can notice: it is not precisely sixty days until Easter. But that is not the point. This season is not about mathematical precision. It is about spiritual wisdom. It may not be good math—but it is very good theology. And it is an excellent spiritual practice that can be embraced by all.

As those enlightened by Christ, we know how human beings work. We know that real conversion rarely happens by sudden enthusiasm. The soul needs to be warmed up. Discipline needs to be reintroduced gradually. The heart needs to remember again what it has forgotten.

So Pre-Lent is a kind of spiritual wake-up call: time to start stretching and conditioning, to come to the starting blocks because the race is about to begin. It is the Church saying: Easter is coming. The fast is coming. The contest is coming. Do not wait until Ash Wednesday to get serious. Begin now. Begin with small acts of self-denial. Begin returning to prayer with intention. Begin ordering your life again around God rather than around convenience.

And this matters, because Lent is not just about “giving something up.” Lent is about discipline. It is about learning to govern the passions, resist temptation, and grow in virtue. It is about becoming the kind of Christian who can actually carry the Cross with Christ—and not merely admire it from a distance.

And when the Church speaks of fasting, she is not speaking only about food. She is speaking about fasting from what weakens the soul: bitterness, impurity, laziness, gossip, constant noise, constant scrolling, constant distraction. She is speaking about the kind of discipline that restores freedom.

So I invite you to treat the time remaining in this sacred pre-season with seriousness.

Not because the Lord needs us to do it—He does not. But because we need it.



If we begin now, Lent will not feel like a shock. It will feel like a continuation and intensification of what we have already begun. And it will make Easter Sunday all the more the celebration of Christ's victory over sin and death.

And in that sense, by honoring the tradition of Septuagésima, we are doing something very humane and very wise: preparing for the spiritual campaign that will quickly be upon us.

The world knows how to pre-game for the Superbowl. Our tradition teaches us how to prepare for the Resurrection. And Easter is the greater contest, the greater triumph, and the greater ring.

So begin now. Ease into it. Get ready. Because the feast of feasts is coming—and the seed planted by discipline and prayer will germinate and bear the fruit of Christ's victory in our hearts.