

FROM THE PASTOR'S



Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time February 22, 2009 B

LENT - A SPIRITUAL SPRINGTIME

This Wednesday begins the holy season of Lent. The word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for springtime.

In the early Church, Lent was a period of final preparation for the unbaptized prior to their baptism or initiation into the Christian community. For the already baptized, Lent was an opportunity to deepen their baptismal commitment to Christ. For both the baptized and the unbaptized, Lent is intended to be a *spiritual springtime* - a time to focus more fully on our relationship with Christ. On Ash Wednesday, the prophet Joel says to us:

*"Rend your hearts,
not your garments."*

Commenting on that verse from Joel, Thomas Merton writes: "*Rendering only your garments lets in nothing but air, rendering our hearts lets out sin and lets in God's grace.*"

"Ambassadors of reconciliation"

In the second reading for Ash Wednesday, Paul speaks about our call to be ambassadors of reconciliation. If we, with the grace of God, work during Lent to let go of some hurt or grudge that we have been carrying for years, it would be a very successful Lent.

If interested in making this a Lenten focus and if you may need a little help achieving this goal, come to Our Lady's Chapel this Tuesday, February 24 at 7 PM. I will offer a **90 minute seminar on Forgiving Life's Hurts** which will touch upon:

- What forgiveness is and isn't
- Ten obstacles to forgiveness
- Ten things to remember about the forgiveness process
- Prayer suggestions for letting go a hurt

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving

The gospel for Ash Wednesday speaks about prayer, fasting and almsgiving - three traditional Lenten practices.

Prayer. In and through authentic prayer, we create a space for God. In our Lenten prayer, we open ourselves to God asking him to show us where there is sin in our lives, where there is a need for repentance and

conversion. Such prayer demands radical honesty on our part because most of us have a resistance to looking for sinful attitudes and behaviors in our lives: racism, unforgiveness, pride, lack of trust in God, sins of the tongue, greed, a judgmental spirit, etc. Good use of one or more of our Lenten devotionals can also deepen our prayer lives.

Fasting. Through fasting from certain foods and drinks, we can experience in some *small* way the extreme hunger that millions of people experience daily. Of course, we can also choose to fast from excessive use of the television, or by keeping the television turned off for one day each week.

The March Newsletter sent to all registered parishioners has an excellent article on fasting.

Almsgiving. Almsgiving is a way we reach out to the poor by sharing money, clothing and food. There is also a form of almsgiving that is connected with forgiveness. St. Augustine writes: "*There are many kinds of alms, the giving of which helps us to obtain pardon for our sins; but none is greater than that by which we forgive from our heart a sin that someone has committed against.*"

This Wednesday's almsgiving collection will be for our Social Concerns Ministry, which enables us as a parish to reach out on a daily basis to the many hurting people in our area.

Operation Rice Bowl is a ministry of Catholic Relief Services whose mission is to represent our Church in many parts of the world. On Ash Wednesday, you will be offered a Rice Bowl which you can use to place loose change in during Lent. Return your offering on Palm Sunday or Holy Thursday.

Three legs of a tripod. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are like three legs of a tripod. Prayer nourishes our spirits. Fasting disciplines our bodies, helps us seek the Lord with greater intensity, and puts us in solidarity with those who suffer. Works of charity enlarge our hearts as we commit ourselves to the good of others.

Properly used, these three traditional Lenten exercises can prepare us to renew our baptismal commitment to Christ this Easter Vigil/Sunday.

Stations of the Cross. Beginning this Friday at 5:30 PM in the Church, we will pray together the Stations of the Cross to be followed by a soup supper in the Parish Hall.

Our Lenten Communal Penance Service is scheduled

for Tuesday, March 31 at 4:00PM and 7:00 PM.

Catechism sessions on the sacraments. This week I will resume my two Catechism classes on the sacraments. The Tuesday men's session will begin at 6:00 AM in the Parish Hall. The Ash Wednesday session will take place in the Parish Hall immediately after the 11:00 AM Mass, about 12:15 PM. The following weeks, the Wednesday session will be at 1:30 PM in the Parish Hall.

Focus: Introduction to the liturgy and sacraments. What is liturgy? How does it differ from private prayer? Why seven (and not ten) sacraments? Why do Catholics have seven sacraments when the Bible has no reference to them?

Share a Lenten devotional with a non-churchgoing Catholic or non-Catholic family member, neighbor or co-worker. Each of us is called to be a sower of God's Word. One easy way to do that is by sharing with someone here or elsewhere one of our Lenten devotionals.

Thank God for good friends

In today's gospel, a paralyzed man is carried to Jesus for healing. We do not know how these men carried their friend. But we do know that they cared very much about their friend and were determined to do whatever it takes to get him to Jesus. Hopefully, each of us is blessed with one or more friends who will be there for us in time of need and hopefully we, in turn, will be there for our friends.

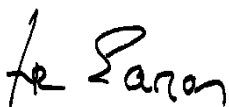
Capital Appeal Update

Our assessment or goal is \$266,000. This past Sunday we received \$86,000 in pledges. I am most grateful to all of you who pledged this past weekend.

The number of Registered Parishioners is 4,100. Of these, 2500 are signed up to receive church envelopes. Only 1800 actually use them. If you do not use your envelopes, please call the parish office and let Flo know so that we can take you off the list.

Next weekend's column: Results of the Sin and Reconciliation survey taken up this past September.

Have a blessed Lenten Season,



... that will also save the Parish money.

Recently our staff met with the organization that provides the system used by the Diocese for their weekly email newsletter to parishes. We wish to use the same system to communicate with you and you with us. We promise you would only get one, at most two, *brief* messages from us each week. If you agree to give us your email address it *will only be used for church purposes*. It will *not* be sold, rented, or made available to other parties. Each message sent will include a means to "unsubscribe" if you decide later to be removed from our email contact list. If you are at least 18 years of age, I would love if you would allow us to communicate with you in this way.

Morning Prayer

*I thank you, Lord,
for the wonder of my being,
for giving me another day to love
and serve you,
and enjoy the awesome beauty
of your creation.*

*May I often think of you during this day.
Inspire everything that I say
and do this day.*

*May it all begin from you and,
with your unfailing help,
be carried through for your glory;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

A New Way to Communicate With You . . .