

SAID ED February 17, 2013

Lent is here!

LENT...traditionally a time of prayer, fasting and alms giving. But why? Why have we Christians, from the very earliest days, marked this period of Lent as a “A Time of Enlightenment” with special penitential practices? What is it that prayer, fasting and the giving of alms is supposed to do? We can all remember earlier days in which it was common for people to tell one another what they were “giving up” for Lent. Stories abound in families about the things people gave up for Lent – whether it was dining out or TV, fighting, candy, or desserts. Today it might reducing play time with gameboys or spending less time “on-line.” But why do we do these things as Catholics? What are these penitential practices supposed to accomplish? It’s a good question.

These penitential practices are designed to change our hearts. We walk the Lenten journey together. We each do Lent alone, but we do it together. In changing our individual hearts, we change all our hearts. The actions of any one of us effect all of us – for good or for ill. So we involve ourselves in these penitential practices to help not only ourselves but also one another in the discipline of Lent. We have an opportunity to draw closer to God and to change our hearts. It’s a time to remove anything that keeps us from being the people that God wants us to be, both from our individual and collective consciences. Anything that keeps us from drawing close to the Lord and one another is the proper focus of our Lenten penance.

We recently sent a flyer to every household in the parish, which listed the events, programs and celebrations of the Lenten season. I urge you to place on your refrigerator or some other prominent place in your home so that you will have a record of the many opportunities that are offered in our parish during this Lenten season. It is our hope that this concise summary of our parish Lenten activities will be a help in making your journey through Lenten a time of spiritual growth. If you did not receive a copy or would like another one, they are available in the foyer and usher’s alcove in the rear of church. This season is a time in which your personal prayer can help transform your life and in which your acts of penance can build up the community of faith.

During Lent, officially we fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, but your personal fasting, whether it be from food or other things can be done at any time. At the rear of the church you’ll find the traditional “mite boxes” for Operation Rice Bowl. This wonderful practice of offering alms for the sake of others is a tried and true Lenten practice. It keeps the needs of the hungry of the world before our minds.

Whatever particular discipline you decide upon for yourself this Lent, know that it is all focused on helping us to change our hearts. I invite you, during this Lenten season, to pray and to fast and to be generous in the giving of alms to others. We are on this journey together that we might celebrate this Lenten season as a time of growth, a time of new life.

It is my sincere hope that during this Lenten Season all of us can be praying for one another and that our hearts can change and that, with our individual hearts changing, all of our hearts will change together.

Have a good week and a great Lent!
