

Feb. 11, 2018: Recapturing the Sabbath during Lent

Dear Parishioners,

Lent is an old English word for spring. Lent begins this Wednesday with Ash Wednesday. And as spring is a time of renewal, growth and life, so should Lent be in our spiritual lives. This is what the ashes of Ash Wednesday remind us of, our mortality: "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." As our mortal bodies slip ever closer toward the grave, it is a reminder to value what is spiritual and eternal. To value, honor and foster that relationship with our Creator from whence we came and to whom we shall return when this life is over. It is God who gave us life and sustains our life. God deserves much more attention than he usually gets from us. Lent is the time to grow in our awareness of the presence of God and strengthen our relationship with him.

Lent is a time when we can ask ourselves what can be done to grow in our relationship with God. God never forces his way into a life, though he does make himself available. God must be invited into our time and space. We suffer from a culture that is a slave to activity and technology has only served to exacerbate this problem.

Perhaps something we could all work on during Lent is recapturing the notion of the Sabbath rest. We inherited the notion of Sabbath from the Jews. The Sabbath originates from God's taking a rest from the work of Creation on the 7th day. The Sabbath rest becomes a precept and command in the 3rd Commandment, to keep holy the Sabbath. For Christians the Sabbath rest was moved from Saturday to Sunday because Sunday was the day of the Lord's Resurrection and this is the day Christians wanted to celebrate Sabbath.

Sabbath is to participate in God's freedom, in God's rest, and thus his peace. To celebrate the Sabbath means to celebrate covenant. It means to return to the source where there will be no more slaves and masters but only free children of God. Sabbath is to disconnect for a time from all the demands and problems that weigh life down.

On the 7th day God rested, took Sabbath, to look back, enjoy and rest in what he created. God wants us to take Sabbath. We need Sabbath, a day free from consumerism and profit-making activity, a day free of demands, a day to reflect, look back, worship, give thanks, and cultivate friendships, family unity and other social and cultural needs. Perhaps a day disconnected from technology and enjoyed in nature.

I wish everyone a fruitful Lent and Sabbath rest.

In Christ,

Fr. Vincent