

Lenten Season

Dear friends in Christ,

Beginning this Wednesday, you will notice when you enter the church that the sanctuary will no longer be decorated with flowers, the color of the altar cloth and priest's vestment will change to purple and the "Gloria" will not be sung on Sundays. These changes are because we are entering a new liturgical season, the holy season Lent. Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday, is a special time that draws us closer to who God is, makes us more conscious of our humanity and calls us to greater awareness of others. It is a forty-day period in which our relationships — with God, our self and others — need a special auditing. The Gospel reading of Ash Wednesday tells us that this auditing comes through three pillars of Lent: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Why do we emphasize these three areas of our faith during Lent?

The teachings of the Church in a very beautiful and succinct way, tell us what it truly means to pray, fast and give alms during Lent and beyond.

Without prayer, fasting and almsgiving are merely actions we do out of tradition without much meaning. Prayer is our conversation with God. It is through prayer that we find the strength to fast. It is through prayer that we develop a closer, more intimate relationship with God. This relationship makes us so grateful for the blessings he has bestowed upon us that we eagerly give to those less fortunate than us. The Church, in her wisdom, understands that prayer is essential to any action we Christians may undertake. Prayer allows us to be open to an attitude of inner docility and listening to God's voice.

Fasting is one of the most ancient actions linked to Lent. By abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday and Fridays of Lent, and by fasting from full meals we become more conscious that as humans we are vulnerable creatures with weaknesses. And as such, we constantly need the grace of God in our daily lives. The prophet Isaiah insists that fasting without changing our behavior is not pleasing to God. Therefore, the goal of fasting is linked with prayer. The pangs of hunger remind us of our hunger for God, and prayer and fasting together brings us to what Lent is about - a deeper conversion.

Almsgiving is simply our response to God, a response that we have come to through prayer and fasting. It is an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us, and a realization that in the Body of Christ, it is never just "me and God." Through prayer and fasting we come to a deeper understanding that the needs of all are the responsibility of all in the Body of Christ. Works of charity and the promotion of justice are integral elements of the Christian way of life we began when we were baptized.

How can your Lenten experience be different from the ordinary time? What are you doing for Lent? Try not to settle for the ordinary, rather do something extra. Our parish has a variety of resources, events and programs during this holy season of Lent to help you grow in your faith:

- Join one of our **Faith-Sharing Groups**
- Attend our parish **Lenten Retreat** on March 16th
- Attend our **Lenten Talk** on April 3rd
- Sign up on FORMED through holytrinitybandon.formed.org. Watch inspiring videos and listen to spiritual talks on FORMED.
- Attend Mass more than once a week.
- Spend time in adoration with the Lord.

I encourage you to use this Lenten season to grow in relationship with God and with one another.

I wish you a fruitful Lenten season.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule