

Lenten Message from the Pastor

The 2018 Lenten Season begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14 with Easter Sunday on April 1. Lent invites all of us to come back to the Lord wholeheartedly and in every aspect of life. The Prophet Isaiah says: “No, the hand of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, it is your crimes that separate you from your God, it is your sins that make him hide his face so that he does not hear you” (Is: 59: 1-2).

Lent is a time of Grace (*Kairos*). We should enjoy it in its fullness. Our sins are impediments to enjoy this wonderful time of Grace. We have broken off our love and relationship with God, our fellow beings and nature by our sins. Lent offers us the opportunity to repair the damages caused by our sins. Let us make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by which our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled with God, man and nature.

We are called not just to abstain from sin during Lent, but to true conversion of our hearts and minds as followers of Christ. Lent is the primary penitential season in the Church's liturgical year, reflecting the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in fasting and prayer. The liturgical season of forty days which begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with the celebration of the Paschal Mystery (Easter Triduum). All Sundays during the Lenten Season are excluded from fasting since every Sunday is celebrated as the Lord's Day on which we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord.

Lent is a season of Penance which consists of:

- + spiritual exercises
- + penitential liturgies
- + pilgrimages as signs of penance
- + voluntary self-denial
- + fasting - voluntary self-denial
- + almsgiving - voluntary self-denial
- + charitable works - fraternal sharing
- + missionary works - fraternal sharing

Catechism of the Catholic Church in no. 1438 states: “The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).”

Lent also focuses on the messianic nature of Jesus. Lenten season helps us to rediscover the true messianic nature of Jesus. Jesus, true God and true Man, sympathizes with us in everything but without sinning. We read in the Bible: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet

without sin” (Heb. 4:15). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in no. 540 states: “Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him.[] This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."[] By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.”

Lent is the appropriate time to re-read and re-live all the events related to the Salvation History. Lenten season gives us the opportunity to meditate upon the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord. The *Via Crucis*, one of the traditional forms of popular piety during the Lenten Season, helps us to mediate upon the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord. We read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in no. 1095: “For this reason the Church, especially during Advent and Lent and above all at the Easter Vigil, re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the "today" of her liturgy. But this also demands that catechesis help the faithful to open themselves to this spiritual understanding of the economy of salvation as the Church's liturgy reveals it and enables us to live it.”

I wish you all A Fruitful and Grace-filled Lenten Season. Let us try to live this Season of Lent with great joy.

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