

Feb. 25-26, 2017

Thoughts from the pastor,

I hope and pray that you are ready for Lent. Asking you to read and reflect on the Sermon on the Mount this past month was meant to do just that. For the sacrifices of Lent to make any sense we must understand what they are about. If we fast without a spiritual goal we are simply dieting. If we abstain from one food only to pig out on another we gain nothing. Our Lenten observances are for a purpose. As a reminder, here they are for this year.

Lent begins Ash Wednesday, March 1, and continues until the Easter triduum, which begins with evening Mass of the Lord's Supper Thursday, April 13, and runs through Easter Sunday, April 16.

The Law of abstinence – prohibits eating meat but allows eggs, milk products and sauces made with animal fat and applies to all Catholics 14 and older on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday (April 14).

St. Patrick's Day – Citing the tradition of corned beef and cabbage meals as part of the observance of St. Patrick's Day, Archbishop George J. Lucas dispenses Catholics in the archdiocese from the prohibition of eating meat Friday, March 17. Those choosing to eat meat March 17 are required to abstain from meat March 18.

The law of fasting – allows a single full meal each day and two light meals at other times but no solid food between meals and applies to Catholics ages 18 through 59 on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Abstinence from meat helps us understand that Jesus gave His Body for us so that we may have salvation. In response we give up eating flesh as a sign of thanksgiving to Him and of solidarity with Him in this unselfish act. The fasting which starts on Ash Wednesday and continues during the Fridays of Lent and finishes on Good Friday is a reminder of death. The ashes remind us that our bodies are not our most important asset. They will die. Our soul must be our primary focus. By fasting each of us tries to teach our body that it is not to be the boss. It is not an easy lesson and fasting is only the start but it can certainly help. Overcoming addictions that start in our bodies are a big part of what we must do if we will be free from sin.

This weekend we hear Matthew 6:24-34. It is about dependence on God. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Mt.6:25) This should ring a bell right after reading about the purpose of our Lenten discipline.

Then on Ash Wednesday we will backtrack and hear Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18. This would be wrapped up nicely as we continued on with Mt.6:19-21. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."

This sermon by Jesus should shake us up. He is talking life and death; death as the end of this earthly life, but eternal life if we choose the right path. But it will not be easy as chapter seven reminds us. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few." (Mt.7:13-14) Once again, read all of Mt.7-9 a few times and it will help you this Lent.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank