

## A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

This week the Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Christians everywhere will wear ashes upon their foreheads. The ashes are meant to symbolize our sorrow over our sins and how they separate us from God. The ashes usually disappear from our foreheads by the next day. Our sorrow over our sins should remain with us if we are at all serious about the harm done to our relationship with God by our sins. To remind us of our sorrow and to encourage us to avoid sin and to repair our relationship with God, Christians traditionally undertake various forms of penance and prayer during this Season of Lent. While we often think of penance and prayer as punishment for our sins; it is better to think of penance and prayer as a form of discipline that shapes our minds and hearts to turn away from sin in the future. There are many different ways of penance and prayer during Lent that we can use.

One of these ways is the use of fasting from food during Lent. During Lent able bodied adult Catholics are bound by Church teaching to abstain from food on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (*please note that small amounts of food are allowed for those fasting on these days if needed to preserve strength or health. Also note that children and those persons who are sick or elderly are not bound by Church teaching to abstain from food on these days. Though I would encourage them to participate in fasting as much as they are able while not endangering their health.*) In addition, Catholics should abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. These are the minimal requirements regarding fasting during Lent. Catholics are free to practice additional forms of fasting - such as abstaining from meat throughout the Season of Lent - as they wish.

Many Catholics choose to give up for Lent some pleasurable food or activity. This is another worthy form of penance. For example, a Catholic may choose to limit the amount of time spent online or watching television during Lent. Another example may be to stop participating in social media or to stop playing video games during Lent. You can choose your own form of penance that means the most to you.

Penance without prayer is unguided. We all should seek to draw closer to God through prayer during the Season of Lent. St. Anne Parish gives us all a wonderful opportunity to pray through the traditional practice of the Stations of the Cross which will be held in the church on Fridays during Lent at 7pm. In addition to this public form of prayer you may wish to add some additional private prayer to your life during Lent. For example, you may wish to pray all or part of the rosary on a daily or weekly basis during Lent, or you may desire to attend Eucharistic Adoration during the Season of Lent.

Finally, I strongly encourage you to go to confession during this Lenten Season.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff  
Pastor