

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

Later this week the Season of Lent will begin with Ash Wednesday on February 14. Lent is a penitential season in which we recall with sorrow our sins; we reflect on how our sins have harmed ourselves, our family and neighbors, and our relationship with God; and how our sins made the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ necessary in order to bring about the forgiveness for our sins and the restoration of our relationship with God. During this Season of Lent, we do more than just “recall” or “remember” our sins and our griefs. We also undertake concrete physical actions that help to reinforce our sense of sorrow for our sinful actions. For Christians, our experience of God is not just one of the mind, but it is also an experience of the body as well. Fasting is an excellent example of how physical actions can reinforce our interior mental life with God.

Fasting gets its power from the fact that food is one of the good things of the earth. We human beings are meant to enjoy the food we eat. Sure, we could consume a bland but sufficiently nutrition rich paste to obtain the calories and nutrition we need to continue living, but who would want to do that on a regular basis? Food is for us both a source of substance for continued living and a source of joy as well. Furthermore, like the other good things of the earth, food is meant to be a constant reminder of the greater joys of the Kingdom of God. In other words, if we in the here and now look forward with great anticipation to a delicious well prepared steak dinner imagine how much more we should look forward to the greater joys of being with God forever.

Sometimes we become forgetful of the future joys of the Kingdom of God. We can also become enamored with the things of earth and cease hoping for the better things to come. Therefore, it is a good practice to once in a while deny ourselves the good things of the earth such as food for a short time. This is done so that we might learn to set aside the good things of the earth when necessary so that we do not risk losing the better things of the Kingdom of God. While we are fasting we should keep in mind how our attachments to the things of the earth has led us into sin and separation from God. We should commit ourselves during our fasting to remembering how we should dedicate our lives not for our comparatively short time on earth, but for eternal life in heaven.

During Lent Catholics practice fasting on two days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On these days the practice of the Church is that the most that should be eaten is one regular meal and two smaller meals that do not equal a regular meal. You are free to eat less if you so desire. These practices are not binding on children, the elderly, the sick or injured, or anyone else for whom fasting may create a danger to their health. Also during the Lent season Catholics abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor