

Dear Parish Family-

Happy Valentine's Day! St. Valentine was a Roman Priest who was martyred for the Catholic Faith by the Emperor Claudis on Feb. 14, 269. He was executed by beheading on the Via Flamina North of Rome by order of the Emperor for marrying Christian couples. He healed one of his guards daughters of blindness having sent her a note signed, 'Your Valentine', thus the origin of sending Valentine Cards signed, 'Your Valentine'. His flower crowned skull is kept in a glass case on a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin in Rome. It is a popular place for couples to become engaged and even married. I personally witnessed a couple getting engaged in front of the skull when I lived in Rome.

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday the beginning of the Lenten Season of Penitence. The reception of Ashes is not mandatory nor is Ash Wednesday a Holy Day, it never has been. There is no magic to the reception of ashes nor is there any curse attached to not getting ashes. It is simply a custom available to those who wish to acknowledge they are sinners in need of redemption. Thus both formulas for reception of ashes are quite starch and startling; "Remember man/woman you are dust and unto dust you shall return". This short prayer reminds us of our mortality, we die, we had better be prepared for judgment, God sees all. God created us from the dust of the earth and we will return there. Lent calls us to get our spiritual life in order. Go to confession lest you die in sin and it's terrible consequences. The other prayer, "Repent and believe in the Gospel" is a command, REPENT. The only person in need of repentance are sinners, this prayer reminds the one receiving ashes that they are a sinners and need to turn from sin and turn toward the Gospel of Redemption. Jesus is our only hope!

Due to Covid-19 we are being asked to discourage people from coming to Church on Ash Wednesday. If a parish chooses to distribute ashes, no parish is compelled to do so this year, we must follow strict precautions. There is the limitation of the number of people allowed in the building for us that is 286, everyone must wear masks covering the nose AND the mouth, observe social distancing of 6 feet, sit in every other pew and only those marked with green tape. There is one Mass at 9am, one service at 12 noon and one service at 4pm. Ashes will be administered at the end of all of these and you must depart immediately and are not permitted to gather in any size group (2 people is considered a group). The formula will be said ONLY ONCE, reception will take place in silence, ashes will be administered using a q-tip (one per person) dipped in a slurry of ash and Holy Water. In accord with Diocesan directives no ashes may leave the Church and none will be distributed outside a Church.

During the Fridays of Lent (Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26) there will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Divine Mercy Novena, Stations of the Cross and Benediction beginning at 3pm. This will be live and Live Streamed. If 3pm is not a suitable time for you, it will be archived for viewing anytime after the live event.

Every Tuesday of Lent at 3pm (Feb. 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30) Fr. Bambrick will prayerfully explore the meaning of tribulation and suffering in the Christian Pilgrimage of Life. The series is entitled **“Lacrimarum Valle”** meaning “The Vale (Valley)of Tears” from Psalm 84 and the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen). This will also be live and available on Live Stream and archived for later viewing.

On Monday Feb. 8 our Holy Father Pope Francis reminded world diplomats that Countries and Societies must promote the Right to Life. He said, that it is “painful” for him to see more countries move away from “their inalienable duty to protect human life” from conception to natural death.

“The pandemic forced us to confront two unavoidable dimensions of human existence: sickness and death. In doing so, it reminded us of the value of life, of every individual human life and its dignity, at every moment of its earthly pilgrimage, from conception in the womb until its natural end ...It is painful, however, to note that under the pretext of guaranteeing presumed subjective rights, a growing number of legal systems in our world seem to be moving away from their inalienable duty to protect human life at every one of its phases,”

“For each human person is an end in himself or herself, and never simply a means to be valued only for his or her usefulness. Persons are created to live together in families, communities and societies, where all are equal in dignity. Human rights derive from this dignity, as do human duties, like the responsibility to welcome and assist the poor, the sick, the excluded,”

“If we deprive the weakest among us of the right to life, how can we effectively guarantee respect for every other right?”

In light of our Holy Fathers message, consider making the Right to Life and the dignity of human life from conception to natural death a meditation that moves you to action in support of life this Lenten Season.

Have a blessed and Prayerful Lent.

Peace and Good – Fr. Bambrick