

March 2-3, 2019

Dear Parishioners,

Parce Domine: "Spare, O LORD, your people" (Joel 2:17). We will hear these words in the First Reading for Mass on Ash Wednesday, and we will sing this refrain throughout the holy season of Lent.

The next 40 days are a time of penance and conversion, as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. The purpose of penance is to respond to Christ's call: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving help us to turn away from sin and to embrace God.

With that in mind, please remember that on Ash Wednesday (March 6) and Good Friday (April 19), abstinence from meat is obligatory for all Catholics ages 14 and above; fasting from the normal amount of food is obligatory for Catholics ages 18 to 59. On the Fridays of Lent, abstinence from meat is required.¹

In addition to these requirements, I encourage you to choose one or two other forms of penance, and to perform them conscientiously. Here are some possibilities:

1. Pray the Stations of the Cross on Friday at the parish (7:00pm)
2. Come to weekend Mass 10 minutes early in order to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet
3. Reduce your consumption of alcohol and desserts
4. Fast on Fridays (understood as consuming one full meal and two smaller meals)
5. Turn off the TV at home and the radio in your car
6. Couples and families: pray the Rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet together during the week
7. Read and pray with the readings for Sunday Mass (available at www.usccb.org)
8. Couples and families: spend more time together on Sunday
9. Visit a sick person, or contact someone who's fallen off the social radar screen
10. Receive the Sacrament of Penance

During Lent, it is especially important to receive the Sacrament of Penance, as the season focuses on conversion. In addition to the normal times for confessions (Saturday at 4:30pm, Thursday at 6:00pm), you can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation between 6:00 and 7:00pm on Friday.

It's helpful to remember that the word "Lent" (derived from the Old English *lencten*) means "spring." As the natural world comes back to life, so the Church seeks new life by preparing to celebrate the Resurrection of the Savior at Easter.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Tony Marques

P.S. — On the reverse side of this letter you will find a handy list of Lenten activities in the parish.

¹ Code of Canon Law, canons 1251-1253; U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Complementary Norm to canon 1253 (1983).