



From the Pastor's Desk:

What would you say if I told you that Lent is coming beginning this Wednesday? Lent? Wait a minute, we just finished Christmas!!!!!!!!!!!!!! See what a couple of days of snow will do? And yet the winter weather places us right where we need to be when it comes to preparing for the Springtime of Easter. Lent gives us time to think about the sometimes coldness of our souls in relationship to God and His desire for our holiness. In the midst of wintery weather God uses the Church to draw our attention to that which makes our souls so cool or cold to the plan God has for our happiness, namely, SIN. Sin dominates our lives, our families, our community, our county, state and nation. Lent is a time I can change the world, by changing myself. Lent is the time to make a difference in the world by making a difference in myself and in our families.

What will you do for Lent? Don't give up food; give up feeding yourself with sinful thoughts, words and actions. Change your attitude not your dessert choices. Think of fasting as a time to eat less so that your stomach growls and reminds you to ask yourself, how you are succeeding at being a more kind, generous and selfless person. No MEAT and ONLY ONE Full Meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday is not the end of the world!!!!!!!!!! NOT EATING MEAT on the Fridays of Lent is not going to through your psyches into a frazzle!!!!!! The only thing that HOPEFULLY will HAPPEN is that when you do something different, you'll think about WHY you're doing it and that will bring you back to the focus of Lent as a time of prayer, penance and change so that you can put an end to sin and be the person God has called you to be, namely, His son or daughter, working each day to imprint His love on the world. I found the following idea that might help us get ready for Lent on Wednesday.

"Before we get to Ash Wednesday, we should start asking ourselves some questions and we should start with some preparations. "What does God want to give me this year?" This question may require that I slow down a bit and *listen* to my inner spirit. For example, even if I'm very busy, I realize I'm hungry when I hear my stomach start "growling." "What am I going to be doing on Ash Wednesday?" Too often, Ash Wednesday is like every other day, except that I manage to get to church and get ashes on my forehead. Is there anything else I can do on Ash Wednesday? How will fasting and abstaining happen for me, for my family on that special day?

"Lent is not something I need to do alone. If I have a spouse, or children, or some close friends, or distant e-mail companions, I can begin now to talk about how we will support each other in this Lenten journey. The anticipation and the preparation is transformed with the companionship of family and close friends. We shouldn't be deterred by the fear that our spouse or children or friends "won't be into it." Jesus said, "Fear is useless; what's needed is trust." Let's begin now to tell others about our desires. Let's help support others' expectations. Let's help others see that Lent doesn't have to be something I avoid, and certainly can't be reduced to "giving up candy." We can help our loved ones to begin to imagine what they could receive from God in these days.

"Ash Wednesday is a great place to start with our planning. "What are we going to eat?" We shouldn't be embarrassed if we really haven't fasted in a long time, or perhaps ever before. We can plan to *intentionally* have only one full meal on Ash Wednesday. We can make that meal very meaningful and symbolic."

And speaking of Lent, it's about Jesus Journey to Death on the Cross as depicted in the Stations of the Cross. Aren't our "Stations" beginning to "Stand out"? Take a closer look at each one, pause and pray reflectively. You'll be changed when you see how much He loves you.

May God +bless you, and yours, now and forever.

Father Anthony

