



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church

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Reverend Monsignor Joseph DeGrocco
Pastor

Ash Wednesday, 2014

Dear Parishioners, and Dear Visitors to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish,

GRACE, PEACE AND BLESSINGS TO YOU ON THIS EXTRAORDINARY DAY OF ASH WEDNESDAY, A DAY WHICH TOUCHES OUR HEARTS SO DEEPLY!

We all know of the difficult winter weather we have had to endure this year. Polar vortexes of sub-freezing temperatures and storm after storm have made it a trying time for all. How much we all look for the warmer spring weather to arrive, an arrival which signals to us new life and new growth!

The word “Lent” means “springtime.” During the Lenten season we are asked to engage in a journey with the entire Church where we seek to enter into a transition from a kind of spiritual winter into a spiritual springtime. We seek to enter into the mystery of dying and rising with Jesus during the days of Lent: we should die to sin and whatever is holding us back from deeper love of God and love of and service to our neighbor, and we should rise to experience the new life of deeper love and union with Jesus and with others. In short, we do our Lenten disciplines so that come Easter, Christ’s life has grown in us and Christ’s light shines more brightly through us.

That journey begins today, Ash Wednesday. As we are branded with the ashes which come from burned palms from last year’s Palm Sunday, we are reminded of the seriousness of the journey of repentance which we undertake. The Collect (Opening Prayer) for Ash Wednesday asks that *“as we take up battle against, spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.”* On Ash Wednesday we ask God that as we follow our Lenten observances, we may be worthy to come with “minds made pure” to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of his Son Jesus Christ. In other words, the Lenten journey is a journey toward Easter, at which time the Church celebrates Baptism and the renewal of Baptism, which is our new life in the Risen Christ.

All throughout Lent we hope you will join in the various activities and programs that OLPH will be offering; information about them can be found in our weekly bulletin and on our website, www.olphlindenhurst.org. We look forward to seeing you at Masses and Stations of the Cross; we look forward to having you join in our Parish Mission; we will take great joy in welcoming you to help with our many opportunities for service to others; we look forward to greeting you in the Sacrament of Penance, especially if it has been a long, long time since you have gone to Confession (we love to welcome people back). We look forward to journeying through our Lenten days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving together...and, of course, it’s not too early to begin to plan on joining in celebrating the liturgies of the Sacred Triduum — Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday!

May your Lenten season be a blessed one! Let us pray for one another as we all make this journey from spiritual winter to spiritual springtime and new life together!

Sincerely,

Reverend Monsignor Joseph DeGrocco
Pastor