



A MESSAGE FROM FATHER JACK

Dear Friends:

Lent is a time to drink deeply of the word of God. St. Ambrose, an early Church Father, once said that if we drink deeply of the word of God, we will crave even more. That's what Lent does: it calls us to deeply take in God's Word and His love for us.

As we enter into the liturgical season of Lent, one of the Church's most intense penitential moments in which we, reflecting on the 40 days of Jesus spent in the desert in fasting and in praying before His public ministry, draw ourselves close to Christ and deepen in our faith.

The discipline of Lent is a time for us Catholics to clean house spiritually. We are coming out of the winter months, things have been sluggish and perhaps our prayer life has been sluggish as well. Lent is a time for us to wipe out the cobwebs, to look at ourselves and ask: how can I become spiritually more fit?"

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, during Lent, we are asked to express an interior penance, especially through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, all of which allow a conversion in relation to oneself, God and others. "Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance." (CCC 1435)

It is essential for us to be disciplined in following Christ. As His disciples we are called to imitate Christ in every way. Christ Himself lived a disciplined life, with a focus on doing God's will. In living a life of sacrifice and discipline we can become a mirror image of Christ to others.

The three basic practices of Lent are PRAYER, FASTING and ALMSGIVING. In the case of PRAYER, that means lifting up our hearts to God in prayer as well as our mind. Some popular forms of prayer include the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, participation in a Holy Hour of Adoration and the Christian Hours of Prayer.

As we walk the Stations we see it as part of our life and how our life is part of that Cross that Christ endures.

For some, FASTING or abstaining from enjoyment of life can be a daunting thought. After all we live in a culture that glorifies self-pleasure and doing what we want. But when the Church speaks of the importance of fasting, the point is we are emptying ourselves so as to be filled with Christ.

There is a ripple effect that can come from fasting. By giving up things we enjoy in life, such as fast food, we have a chance to become aware of those who do not enjoy those same luxuries. That can translate into saving what we would have spent on a meal or special beverage and donate it to the missions, Catholic Relief Society or Operation Rice Bowl.

Put simply, ALMSGIVING is fulfilling the mission of Christ in that we're called to share the Gospel, as Christ told His disciples and go out through all the world and make disciples. Faith is never to be a private matter between God and oneself. It's always meant to be shared.

Lent makes us conscious of the bottom line; "God, without You, I am nothing." Lent makes us more conscious to be immersed in the world. Lent is a time to drink deeply of the Word of God.

Gratefully,  
Father Jack