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(Joel 2:12)

LENT 2024

The season of Lent is a powerful time of grace and mercy. The Lord calls us back to the basics: to love God and neighbor through prayer, penance, and almsgiving.

We spend so much time focused on ourselves that our hearts become turned inward. The disciplines of Lent are a kind of “spiritual therapy” designed by God to turn us back toward God and neighbor. Like physical therapy, it can feel a bit painful at first as our hearts are bent back in the direction they’re supposed to be. But the result is greater freedom and joy.

The underpinning of this great season is God’s mercy. It is only because of his great mercy that we can repent, that we can be changed, that we can recommit to loving the Lord and our neighbor as we were made to love. And he wants this for us! Our Scripture readings for Ash Wednesday open with this plea from God: “Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning.” (Joel 2:12) The Lord wants us to return home to him. We don’t have to convince him to be merciful or take us back. We don’t have to barter or bargain with him. He simply says, “Return to me!”

Please join us this Lent as we respond to the Lord’s call and enter into this ancient time of preparation for Easter!

PRAYER

Daily Mass

"In the Eucharist is all the power that created the universe and all the love that redeemed it," William Cardinal O'Connell. Join us for daily Mass and receive the Lord's power and love in your life to help you meet the challenges and trials of each day. The Mass readings are specially chosen to help draw us more deeply into Lent. Please join us!

Eucharistic Adoration

At Mass the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Jesus. We feed on this gift at Mass, but we also adore his Real Presence in Eucharistic Adoration. Adoration takes place at St. John every Thursday evening until Friday morning Mass, and after Mass continues throughout the day and night until Saturday morning Mass. Come and spend some quiet time in the presence of the Lord – it is a great time of peace, healing and spiritual refreshment.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

We all fall short in loving God and neighbor. Rather than getting used to it, or suffering through the shame or guilt, what if there was a way to start over? What if there was a way to be strengthened so that you could break out of your patterns of sin and live differently? God offers us his mercy to give us that new start.

See the last page for the many opportunities we have to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lent on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Remember, no matter how long it has been the priest is ready to help you! Come and meet Christ in the Sacrament of his mercy!!

Stations of the Cross

Join us every Friday of Lent at 12noon and 7p.m. in the Church as we pray the Stations of the Cross. Early in the life of the Church it became common for pilgrims to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in Jerusalem, remembering his Passion and Death. Later, Stations of the Cross were added to local churches as an alternative. The Stations commemorate Jesus' journey to Calvary where he died. Originally prayed outdoors, the Stations of the Cross gradually moved inside churches where they became a familiar feature. Join us for this beautiful Lenten devotion.

Lenten Evening of Worship

Join us Friday, Feb. 16, following Stations of the Cross for our monthly Evening of Worship beginning at 7:45p.m. In the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, we have the opportunity to draw near to Jesus in prayer, praise and worship. All are welcome.

FASTING

Fasting is the voluntary giving up of food, drink, and other material things that expresses our desire to bring a healthy balance back to our relationship with God, ourselves and others. Poor choices in daily life can lead us to become slaves (addicted) to certain material things such as food, drink, television, etc. In fasting, we admit that we are not as free as we would like to be. In fasting, we exercise the gift of our free will (aided by God's grace) to say 'no' to certain things (which are not necessarily bad in themselves) in order to allow us to say 'yes' to the Lord and to others.

The Benefits of Fasting

- Fasting awakens the heart to the intimate presence of God in one's soul.
- Fasting encourages more serious reflection about the priorities in our lives.
- Fasting strengthens our sense of dependence upon God.
- Fasting sharpens our sensitivity to the spiritual dimension of life.
- Fasting strengthens our ability to say 'yes' to God and 'no' to sin.
- Fasting develops greater appreciation for the gifts of God, especially food and drink.
- Fasting purifies us, spiritually as well as physically.

Ways to Fast

The season of Lent already comes with some "built-in" fasting: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting and abstinence, while each Friday of Lent we abstain from eating meat. Remember, though, that meatless Fridays don't mean we choose lobster instead. Meatless meals on the Fridays of Lent should be simple, sacrificial, and lead us to reach out in generosity to those who are less fortunate through some act of charity.

The classic form of fasting involves giving up of food or drink. As children we may have given up candy during Lent – this classic approach can be as valuable for adults as for children. Any time we exercise our free will in a deliberate way over and above our cravings and desires we gain control over our lives – the same control that is needed to say "yes" to God and "no" to sin.

We can also fast from an entire meal (lunch on the Fridays of Lent for example). The money normally spent on that meal could be placed in the Poor Box at church.

We can also fast from television, music, or our devices. While not always bad in themselves, these forms of entertainment can so occupy our lives that we have trouble hearing God. In place of television or the phone, we can spend time with those we love or in quiet prayer with God (reading from Scripture, looking at the Sunday Mass readings, etc.) or in service to others.

Remembering that fasting is a form of penance and self-denial, there are many other ways that we can show God our sorrow for our sins: being generous with others, visiting the sick and lonely, feeding the poor, studying Scripture, praying the Stations of the Cross or the Rosary, practicing self-control, and many others.

Lenten Norms for Fasting and Abstinence Fasting:

Catholics aged 18—59 are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting on these days means we can have only one full, meatless meal. Some food can be taken at the other regular meal times if necessary but *combined they should be less than a full meal*. Liquids are allowed at any time, but no solid food should be consumed between meals. Individuals who are pregnant, nursing, or ill are excused from these norms.

Abstinence from Meat:

Catholics aged 14 and older are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays during the season of Lent.

ALMSGIVING

Almsgiving is not only an offering of money to those in need but an attitude of generosity and a willingness to share in the burdens of others. Almsgiving is closely tied to fasting; whatever we save (money or time) should be offered to the needy.

Here are some ways you can give alms this Lent:

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry

Each month, the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry (located in the Parish Center) distributes between 250 - 350 bags of groceries to our neighbors in need. Volunteers sort donations, pack bags, and assist with monthly food deliveries from the Anne Arundel County Food Bank. Check the weekly bulletin for a list of our most needed items. If you are interested in volunteering 1 - 2 hours per month, please contact **Cindy Halloran** at SVDP@stjohnsp.org to learn more.

Lenten Poor Box Collections

Help support those in need by contributing to our Poor Box during Lent. As the parish receives requests for assistance our St. Vincent de Paul Society is ready to help. Thank you for helping meet the needs of our brothers and sisters!

Casseroles for Our Daily Bread

Catholic Charities' Our Daily Bread is Maryland's largest hot meal program, serving more than 250,000 meals to the hungry of Baltimore City each year. Casserole pans and recipes can be picked up in the Gathering Space and are due back to St. John on Sunday, March 27 between 7:15-11:15a.m. Please contact **Mike Walsh** at 410-703-3132 for more information.

CRS Rice Bowls

Our Faith Formation students have participated in this Lenten tradition for many years. Sponsored by Catholic Relief Services, Operation Rice Bowl is a daily reminder of the struggles and needs of God's people around the globe. Children put the rice bowl in a special gathering place inside their homes. Throughout Lent, families make sacrifices by contributing a portion of allowances, dessert or treat money, etc., into the rice bowl. The Faith Formation Office collects these sacrifices the week before Easter. Please contact **Ruth Gorski** at 410-647-4892 to request a rice bowl for your family.

Easter Triduum

The Sacred Easter Triduum (Latin for "three days") is the 72-hour period at the end of Holy Week marking the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

The three days are counted as the Hebrews counted their days, from dusk to dusk. Therefore, the three days of the Easter Triduum are from dusk on Holy Thursday to dusk on Good Friday (day one), dusk on Good Friday to dusk on Holy Saturday (day two), and dusk on Holy Saturday to dusk on Easter Sunday (day three). Each of those days celebrates and commemorates the final days of Jesus as he offered himself for our salvation.

We look at the Easter Triduum as one single celebration that lasts for three days. We cannot separate the death of Jesus from his resurrection. Please join us for these special celebrations!



HOLY WEEK

Holy Thursday

On this evening we remember and enter into what Jesus did with his disciples the night before he died: He gave them the new commandment of love ("Love one another as I have loved you." John 13:34), symbolized in his washing of the disciple's feet, he instituted the Eucharist. ("Do this in memory of me." Luke 22:19) and prayed for strength in the garden of Gethsemane ("Let your will be done, not mine." Luke 22:42). The Church celebrates these same events, washing the feet of parishioners, celebrating the Eucharist and then ending the evening in prayerful vigil before Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Good Friday

Today is one of the most solemn days in the Church's year when we recall the death of Jesus on the cross. This is the only day of the year the Church does not celebrate the Mass. Instead, the ritual is in three parts: the Liturgy of the Word (when we read the account of his passion and death), veneration of the cross, and Communion (consecrated on Holy Thursday evening). This service does not stand alone; it is a continuation of what began on Holy Thursday. The veneration of the cross is a practice unique to Good Friday. It is our opportunity to humble ourselves before the awesome saving action of Christ.

Easter Vigil

This is the holiest night of the Church's year as we recall Christ's Resurrection from the dead. Beginning in darkness with the light of candles, we enter into the celebration of his Resurrection singing the Gloria and Alleluia for the first time since the beginning of Lent. It is on this night that we welcome men and women into the new life of Christ and His Church by celebrating the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist for those becoming Catholic.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Opening Prayer – Jesus came with his disciples to a country place called Gethsemani, and he said to them, "Sit down here, while I go over yonder and pray." Then he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and he began to be saddened and exceedingly troubled. He said to them, "My soul is sad, even unto death. Wait here and watch with me." He went forward a little, and falling prostrate he prayed, saying, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; yet not as I will but as you will." (Mt. 26, 36–30.)

The First Station — Jesus is Condemned to Death

The Second Station — Jesus Carries His Cross

The Third Station — Jesus Falls the First Time

The Fourth Station — Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

The Fifth Station — Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

The Sixth Station — Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

The Seventh Station — Jesus Falls the Second Time

The Eighth Station — Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

The Ninth Station — Jesus Falls a Third Time

The Tenth Station — Jesus is Stripped of His Clothes

The Eleventh Station — Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

The Twelfth Station — Jesus Dies on the Cross

The Thirteenth Station — The Body of Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

The Fourteenth Station — Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Closing Prayer — We adore you, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices that they might go and anoint Jesus. Very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had just risen, they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll the stone back from the entrance of the tomb for us?" for it was very large. But looking up they saw that the stone had been rolled back, and upon entering the tomb they were amazed to see a young man sitting at the right side and clothed in a white robe. He said to them, "Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him." (Mk. 16, 1–6.)

Stations of the Cross are prayed in the Church every Friday in Lent at 12p.m. and 7p.m.

LENT & EASTER 2024

ASH WEDNESDAY – February 14

Blessing and distribution of ashes at:

6:30a.m. (Mass), 8:30a.m.* (Mass), 11:45a.m. (Service), 12:30p.m. (Service), 5p.m. (Mass), 7p.m. (Mass)
(no evening Confessions will be heard on Ash Wednesday due to Mass schedule)

FRIDAYS DURING LENT

9–10a.m. Confessions (immediately following daily Mass, *except Good Friday*)
Eucharistic Adoration 9a.m. until 8a.m. Saturday morning
12p.m. & 7p.m. Stations of the Cross (*except Good Friday*)

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Wednesday mornings: 7—8a.m.
Wednesday evenings: 6—8p.m.
Friday mornings: 9–10a.m. (*except Good Friday*)
Friday afternoons: 4:30—6p.m. (*except Good Friday*)
Saturday afternoons: 3:30–5p.m. (*except Holy Saturday*)

PALM SUNDAY – March 24

Palms will be blessed and distributed at all of the regularly scheduled weekend Masses

HOLY THURSDAY – March 28

8:30a.m.* – Morning Prayer
7p.m.* – Mass of the Lord's Supper in the church, Eucharistic Adoration until Midnight (in the PAC)

GOOD FRIDAY – March 29

8:30a.m.* – Morning Prayer
12p.m. – Stations of the Cross
3p.m.* – Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, including Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion
7p.m. – Stations of the Cross

HOLY SATURDAY – March 30

(No 8:30a.m. or 5:15p.m. Masses, No 3:30p.m. Confessions)
8:30a.m. – Morning Prayer
10a.m. – Children's Easter Egg Hunt
1p.m. – Blessing of Easter Foods in the Church

THE EASTER VIGIL – March 30

8p.m.* – Easter Vigil Mass

EASTER SUNDAY – March 31

Easter Masses celebrated at:
6:30a.m.; 8:30a.m.*; 10:30a.m.; 12:30p.m. in the Church
8:45a.m., 10:45a.m. in the Parish Activities Center

All Masses celebrated in the Church unless otherwise noted.

Please Note: There is no 5:15p.m. Mass on Easter Sunday!

* denotes the event will be livestreamed to our website