

Dear Parishioners,

As we continue to suffer through many challenges in our lives we approach Lent. It's a time of penitence and spiritual fruitfulness. We are called to specially focus on making atonement for our sins during this liturgical season. Good ways of doing so we can find in the Catechism: prayer, fasting and almsgiving, as well as "revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness" (CCC 1435). The text also recommends frequent reception of the Eucharist (CCC 1436). Practically this means trying to attend daily Mass, coming to Confession, accepting and uniting our sufferings to those of Christ in reparation for our sins and those of our family, and adding extra daily prayers for similar intentions.

Lent is a time when Catholics take up the yoke of Christ, that is, of self-denial, fasting, and intercessory prayer in order to bring God's abundant blessings our lives, and into the world. We are encouraged throughout the Scriptures to these things as we see in the following verses:

**Self-denial** – Matthew 16:24, "Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

**Fasting** – Matthew 9:15 "And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

**Intercessory Prayer** - 1 Timothy 2:1-2 "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way."

We see in these Biblical verses encouragement for us to be spiritually fruitful during this time of Lent. While self-denial, fasting, and intercessory prayer are staples of daily Catholic life, during Lent we put a greater emphasis on them. This is, firstly, because we want to draw nearer to God. Secondly, in order to make sure that our unruly passions are put in order. And, thirdly, that our increased prayer may become a blessing for those in need of God's grace, which, in today's world, are many.

Lastly, I encourage you to take up the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy which have become of utmost importance in a time where more and more people are struggling with many challenges. Our parish family must grow in true love of neighbour, and extend that love in practical ways.

Spiritual works of mercy:

- To instruct the ignorant
- To counsel the doubtful
- To admonish sinners
- To bear wrongs patiently
- To forgive offences willingly
- To comfort the afflicted
- To pray for the living and the dead

Corporal works of mercy:

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To harbour the harbourless
- To visit the sick
- To ransom the captive
- To bury the dead

In Christ,

Fr. Matthew Chojna