

FROM THE PASTOR'S LAPTOP:

February 6-7, 2016

Dear Parishioners and Friends:

I'm actually writing this letter on February 3, a full week before Ash Wednesday. And it's intended for you to read this weekend, a few days before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Christmas doesn't sneak up on any of us. Even long before Advent begins, the world around us is reminding us by decorations, music, ads, etc., to get ready for December 25th. And while there may be Cadbury Eggs in the aisles of grocery stores and the feverish activity of preparing snacks, chicken wings, pizza and sliders for the big game this Sunday and looking forward to receiving some of the awesome Victoria Candies on St. Valentine Day next Sunday; the papers aren't filled with ads for Lenten Sales. Except perhaps for Lenten Fish Dinners. Ash Wednesday, especially when it comes so early and during the winter, can take us by surprise and I'm hoping this letter will give you the heads-up we all need to ready ourselves to begin the season that's meant to get us ready to celebrate Easter with pure joy.

First, then, I want to encourage you to participate at Mass on Ash Wednesday, February 10. Ash Wednesday is a Holy Day and significant beginning to this 40 day season of conversion, spiritual growth and renewal. It helps us to get off to a good start. Attached to this letter is our schedule for Ash Wednesday with the distribution of blessed ashes as well as the many spiritual, educational and outreach programs that are being offered in our parish and community during the next six weeks. In addition to your own spiritual reading, Scripture reflection and devotions, I invite you to participate in these spiritual exercises and opportunities.

Lent is a season of "spring training" or "boot camp" for Christians: a time for us to do some spiritual exercises, with God's Grace, to get our spirit in shape in our faith life and ready to celebrate Easter with renewed vigor, with minds and hearts refreshed and renewed.

As you know, the "training program" for Lent has three traditional parts: prayer, fasting and almsgiving (works of mercy, especially for the poor). It is a terrific opportunity to enter even more deeply into the "Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy" proclaimed by Pope Francis. Consider the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Anyone who's wondering, "**What will I do during Lent 2016?**" would do well to prayerfully reflect and seek to answer that question in three ways:

- ***How will I strengthen my prayer life this Lent?***
- ***How will I experience renewed faith in my body as well as my soul over these 40 days?***
- ***How will I reach out to assist those who are in need – the least of my brothers & sisters?***

The Attached Lenten Program provides opportunities to answer these questions for your "spring training" this year. Post it in your home, perhaps on the refrigerator. Prayerfully consider them and ask God to help you decide what is best for you to pursue with God's Grace. Above all, don't allow Lent 2016 to pass you by.

On behalf of Deacon Maurice, our visiting weekend priests and myself, I wish you a holy and blessed "Lenten spring training" and pray that it might be a grace-filled opportunity to deepen your relationship with the living God.

Peace and Blessings,
Father Ric Polmounter
Pastor