

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that Lent is already here. This coming Wednesday, February 25, is Ash Wednesday. So, during these next few days we have the opportunity to discern what our Lenten practices will be. Does that not sound like fun? Perhaps this is a strange question to ask (and I do ask it with a slight amount of sarcasm), but Lent is a joyful season because we know we celebrate our salvation. It's joyful because Lent is a word that means "spring." So, even though the groundhog saw his shadow a couple of weeks ago, warmer weather, longer days, new growth and flowers are so close now. After this winter, how could we not be joyful knowing spring is in the air?

Lent is also a season of penitence and renewal. During Lent we are asked to fast, pray and give alms. The Church places no restrictions on these personal practices, however, there are a few instructions about fasting and abstinence I would like to share with you. I hope the information in the box will be helpful for you.

FASTING is to be observed by all, 18 years of age and older, who have not yet celebrated their 59th birthday. On a fast day, one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids, including milk and juices, are allowed.

ABSTINENCE is observed by all 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence no meat is allowed. Note that when health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige. When in doubt concerning fast and abstinence, the parish priest should be consulted. (CCL 1251-1252)

Fasting, almsgiving, and prayer are the three traditional disciplines of Lent. The faithful and catechumens should undertake these practices seriously in a spirit of penance and of preparation for baptism or of renewal of baptism at Easter.

My hope is that this beautiful season of Lent will lift your hearts and fill your souls with God's peace. Peace is our salvation. Peace and mercy are why Jesus came to earth, suffered, died and rose to new life for us. Peace is the promise of heaven.

I look forward to sharing this wonderful season with you.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel