

Dear Friends,

## LENT BEGINS THIS WEEK!

It is too early; in many ways I feel that I am not prepared, but Lent cannot be delayed; it is here. Now is the time for us to start thinking about what this wonderful season means for us. Lent is a time to fast, to pray and to give alms. Lent is also a time for us to consider what our baptism means to us. Through our baptism we are members of the Body of Christ. This means we participate in an active way in the Pascal Mystery we celebrate during Lent.

All too often it seems we focus so much attention on the penitential aspects of Lent. It is good for us to fast; there are spiritual benefits that last far beyond the hunger or emptiness we feel when we fast. It is good for us to pray more because we need to work on deepening our relationship with God throughout every day of our Lives. It is good for us to be charitable because it helps us grow in compassion for the poor. Lent is, however, a time for us to focus on the reality of our baptism. We have been washed clean of original sin, and in the waters of baptism we were given a new life in Christ. We have been anointed to be members of his body, who proclaim the Good News of God's love by following the examples Christ set for us, thereby setting examples for others. We belong to the priesthood of all believers who make of our homes the domestic church. This means we are to be people of prayer, worship and praise both in our family lives and as a faith community. In baptism we have been clothed with the garment of Christian dignity, a dignity we are to bring to eternal life. We have also been enlightened by the fire of Christ's love. The light of his love illuminates the way for us when the darkness of sin causes us to stumble.

My hope is that this Lenten season will help us to grow in holiness through our acts of fasting, prayer, and charity. I also hope that we will come to a deeper appreciation for who we are right now: we are members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. This appreciation for our lives

as baptized Christians makes Lent a joyful season for us; one that we must celebrate well.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel