

Dear Friends,

The ancient word for Lent is spring and even though there is a fresh coat of snow on the ground as I write this letter, the days are getting longer, the sun is a little brighter, and the season of Lent is well underway. We are beginning to see a light at the end of the winter tunnel and it's not a train. Easter is just a few short weeks away, and by the time we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, spring will be in full bloom.

Along with our fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, Lent has another vital function: this is the time of year in which the Elect make their final preparations to receive the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. This year we have one catechumen and two candidates for full reception into the Church who have been participating in the Rites of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process this year. Unfortunately, two of these three people are still undergoing formal annulment processes and will not be ready to be received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil this year. As soon as their cases come back with the approval of the Tribunals for the Diocese of Rockford and the Archdiocese of Chicago, these two couples will have their marriages blessed in the Church and will receive the Sacraments of Initiation.

Working with this year's RCIA class has been an incredible experience for me. I feel like I am learning more than I am teaching. One of the most important lessons I continue to learn is that life is complicated and that we have to accept that when hoped for expectations don't work out perfectly, the journey is still exciting and beautiful. Since September, the 8 o'clock Mass crowd has seen three people being dismissed each week to break open God's word as they continue the RCIA process. On Saturday evening, April 3, Sara Paulson will receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil. Matthew Viens and Deborah Franckowiak will receive the Sacraments of Initiation at a later date.

I am amazed and humbled by the members of this class because of how well they have accepted each other, and by how joyfully they have worked through the difficulties they have faced in this process. They have worked hard throughout this journey and they have inspired me to remember that being people of faith demands profound integrity and joy. Working with this class has been a lot of fun. It was wonderful to watch Matthew Viens, Sara Paulson, and Deborah Franckowiak have their names written in the Book of Elect at the Rockford Diocese this past Sunday.

Lent is the time of year when we as members of the Catholic Church continue to prepare for and spiritually support those who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation. Let us continue to keep Matthew Viens, Sara Paulson, and Deborah Franckowiak in our thoughts and prayers as this season of Lent continues to spring us all into the light of Easter glory, together.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel