

March 10, 2019

### ***From Fr. Jim . . .***

**Lenten Reflection:** I have a piece of art by a Mexican artist who makes sculptures out of clay and then paints them with bright colors – yellow, orange, blue, red, purple, green. All of the sculptures he calls “The Tree of Life.” Many of these sculptures have secular themes and many have biblical themes that image the Tree of life in the Garden of Eden and tell the story of creation and salvation.



The piece that I have, as it keeps its shape of a tree, tells the story of Noah’s ark. In the midst of all the beautiful flowers, fruit and abundant life, animals are safely on the ark enjoying the life of salvation and there are animals climbing up the side of the ark to get into the boat of life and salvation. It’s as if the life in the Garden of Eden is being restored for all creatures and things are returning to the way they were at the beginning of creation.

Jesus suffered, died and rose for all of us that we might know the salvation of God and join with all creation in being restored to a fullness of life with God. We are in the boat of salvation. God wants and desires for us through Jesus and with their Spirit to live in union with the life of God now and forever.

The forty days of Lent can be like a retreat for the whole church where the people of God examine this reality and grow together more deeply in understanding and appreciating the life, love and salvation that God so generously shares with us. As we understand and accept this reality, Lent becomes a time when we strive to live more closely in union with what we believe and with the life we know God is giving us.

God has given us a promise that God will never push us out of the boat and that we always have a place in it no matter what. When we feel otherwise, more than likely, the attractions of the world and selfishness have lured us back into the troubled waters of sin and death or we are blinded to see the place that God has prepared for us or deaf to God’s call to take our rightful place.

Lent, then, is a wonderful opportunity for us to repent and to seek God’s forgiveness and mercy, to turn away from sin and remain as faithful to the Gospel as we possibly can. It is a time for us to walk with catechumens and candidates for full communion with the church and to examine our lives and our faith journey together with the Lenten Gospels. It is a time for prayer, fasting and giving alms (works of mercy and charity). We do all of this not to earn our place back onto the boat of salvation or to convince God to keep us on the boat but solely as a response to being saved and to being in union with the life of God. Quite frankly, this is what is expected of us as branches on the Tree of God’s Life. We pray, fast, forgive, and live in charity with one another because God has truly saved us from sin and death.

So, what do we want to do this Lent in order to celebrate our place on the Tree of God’s life? How will living with God’s forgiveness and mercy, prayer and the rituals of the church, fasting and giving alms help us to do this? The boat is sailing. Praise God that there is a place for us.

#### **The Light Is On for You**

“The Light Is On for You” is an initiative of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to invite all Catholics, especially those Catholics who have not received this sacrament for a long time, to experience the love and mercy of God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confession is a wonderful opportunity to turn away from our sinfulness and to experience the grace of reconciliation with God and with others in our lives. In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati every parish will be celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation by offering private confessions on Tuesday, March 19, 2019 from 7:00pm – 9:00pm. Every parish church will have their doors open for you.