

## Pastor's Ponderings . . .

With the mark of an ashen cross and the words, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel," the holy season of Lent begins, Wednesday, March 1, 2017.

There is a story of a little boy who was waiting for his mother to come out of the grocery store. As he waited, he was approached by a man who asked, "Son can you tell me where the Post Office is?" The little boy replied, "Sure just go straight down this street a couple of blocks and turn to your right." The man thanked the boy kindly and said, "I am the new pastor in town. I'd like for you to come to church on Sunday. I'll show you how to get to heaven." The little boy replied with a chuckle, "Awww, come on...You don't even know the way to the Post Office."

Lent is a time for finding the way to heaven that the Lord has made for us. We renew and recommit to this way by turning away from the sin in our lives and adhering more faithfully to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a time to walk the spiritual journey through this world to the next one seriously. It is a time for recommitting and committing more deeply to the life of our baptism and for acknowledging Jesus as our only way to heaven and to salvation. It is a time to prepare others for the Sacrament of Baptism and for walking closely together on the trail of salvation. This year, we have of some adults and children preparing for all three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and we have a number of children and adults who are already baptized Catholics and who are completing their initiation into the Church by receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

Lent is a time to admit that we don't always know the way, on our own and we turn to Jesus to show us the way. It is a time to admit that we often get sidetracked or tempted into detours and so we seek the Lord's forgiveness and mercy and begin walking a straighter path with the Lord as our guide. It is a time through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to enter deeply into the paschal mystery of dying to self so that others may truly live. It is a time to acknowledge that dying leads to eternal life because the Lord suffered and died for us so that we might share with him the joy and glory of an everlasting kingdom. It is a time to feast on the mercy of God as food and nourishment for the sacrifice of self and the carrying of the cross that is of utmost importance as we learn to walk in the footsteps of Christ to a life where pain and suffering are no longer.

So, what do we want to do, as individuals and as a parish for Lent in the ways of prayer, fasting and almsgiving? Remember, whatever we decide to do, it should be leading us in the way of heaven and witness to others that all of us are heaven bound. It's time for all of us to grab our walking sticks, put on our hiking boots, take the Lord's hand and keep walking with our eyes fixed on heaven.

At St. Leo's, this Lent, we are especially praying that the Lord will change our hearts to be more in accord with his heart. Through our Lenten prayer and acts of fasting and almsgiving we will become more aware of how the Lord is granting us a change of heart away from any selfishness to a

truer love of God and neighbor. Let us rejoice as our Lord and Savior changes our "stony" hearts to new ones. When you find the journey getting difficult and tedious just remember that the forty days of Lent are always followed by the fifty days of Easter!



**The Light Is On For You.** There was an old television commercial, I believe for Red Roof Inn, and after people were invited to stop and enjoy the comfort and hospitality that the motel would provide especially after they had been traveling on highways for a good part of the night, the commercial ended with these words: "We will keep the porch light burning for you." These words became the motto and slogan for the motel.

I remember how comforting and welcoming it was when I had come home, late at night, and mom and dad left the porch light on for me. It was welcoming, comforting, and forgiving especially and most importantly on the nights that I had broken curfew!

On Tuesday, March 14, 2017, St. Leo will be participating with all the parishes in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and also with Archbishop Schnurr and Bishop Binzer by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our respective parishes from 7PM until 9PM. This night of "hearing confessions" in the Reconciliation Room and celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation according to The Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents is entitled: "The Light Is On For You."

We want to invite everyone to consider receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation on March 14 and we extend a special invitation to those who may not have received this Sacrament for many years. At St. Leo, our beautiful church lights on the front doors of our church will be lit to welcome you and once inside our church candle light and the lights on our Reconciliation Room will continue to extend the church's welcome to you and direct you to meet the merciful and forgiving, loving Christ in this Sacrament.

Prayer aids will be available for anyone who wants them but please do not worry too much about what to do; I will guide you and help you. Once inside the Reconciliation Room, there is a chair in front of the screen if you wish to remain anonymous or if you want to talk to the priest face to face please sit in the chair that you see in the corner of the room on the other side of the screen. This beautiful encounter with the Lord is never so much about what we do or don't do as it is about what God has done, is doing and will do for us. "Has no one condemned you? Nor do I condemn you. You may go. But from now on avoid this sin." (Jn. 8: 10, 11)

Please come and experience God's incredible, merciful, healing and forgiving love. Won't you? God's light of forgiving love is always on for you! The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also celebrated about 5:30pm each Saturday before the 6:00 pm Spanish mass and by appointment.

--Fr. Jim