

BREAKING OUT OF DARKNESS

Ash Wednesday is February 10th. In comparison to previous years, Lent and Easter are earlier this year. Lent is a time when Catholic Christians journey with those who are elected to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. We examine our sinful lives against the movement of God's redeeming grace in order to recommit to God's will and ways for us and to live more for God and others. We desire to become less selfish and less attached to worldly means and ways. During Lent, we prepare to welcome the Elect to the Sacraments and the life of the Church and we prepare to renew our Baptismal promises and commitment to the Lord.

A favorite question among Catholic Christians is: What are you doing for Lent this year? Specifically, what are you doing to welcome those who are converting to the Catholic faith? What are you doing to share faith with them? What are you doing to reject Satan, all of his works and empty promises? What are you doing to believe in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit and in the holy, Catholic Church? What are you doing to foster on going conversion and faith in your life?

Traditionally, the Scriptures that we hear during the Lenten season encourage us to pray, fast and give alms. Included in the Scriptures' directives for us and also included in every response to the above question could be the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. I call your attention to our parish web page and to particular opportunities in each of our parishes to do works of mercy.

Recently, with the help of many volunteers, the St. Leo Food Pantry moved from its former location in the cellar of St. Leo Parish Offices to a more spacious, efficient and accommodating building on the Corner of Baltimore and Carll Streets. We are keeping our regular operating hours of Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 1 to 4 pm and in the future, we are hoping to eventually open on Saturdays. We are also becoming a Choice Food Pantry which means we will no longer have pre-packaged bags to

distribute to the clients but our clients will be able to shop for the food that they need and want.

We are excited about this move and our new partnership with Catholic Charities of South West Ohio. In addition to providing additional resources for the St. Leo Food Pantry, Catholic Charities can offer other social services for our clients. Their offices are still being built in our new facility, but they will offer these services in the near future. God is continuing to bless all of us so that we can continue to feed God's people for a long time.

From registration to stocking the shelves, to collecting food, to helping people select their food items and putting the items in their shopping carts and conversing with them, we are in need of volunteers. Even if it is just for the Lenten Season, please consider helping in the Food Pantry. Any of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy are great ways to break out of the darkness of sin and the darkness of these winter days. Happy Lent to all!

- *Father Jim*