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Liturgical

flame

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR
LITURGICAL MINISTERS

Lent is a time to re-evaluate!

After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit led him into the desert. There in the wilderness He prepared for His public ministry on earth. By virtue of our baptism we are each called to a mission - to be Christ to all who we may encounter. The simplest definition of our mission and perhaps the most difficult is to love one another as Jesus taught us.

This year, Ash Wednesday is February 25, which begins the Lenten season. Throughout the Church there are many symbols to help us to become more aware of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. Certainly, each symbol can offer a deeper meaning beyond what we see physically. The most visible are ashes and fasting. Both are a means to remind us of our need to detach ourselves from things that can take us away from our spiritual needs; things that could ultimately take away our refocus towards God. The length of time for the purpose of refocusing our life is not as important as the sincerity of this period to bring all things into proper perspective. Thus, begins our forty days of Lent...

Some may wonder why 40 days? Certainly 40 days shows up in a number of places in scripture - Noah, Moses, Israelites in the desert. Notice that each reference precedes changes. Each period of time mentioned included trials of the old ways and habits. So whether or not the time frame is actually 40 days, the actual time was sufficient to set the path in a better direction.

Quite often the ministries in which we participate can become stagnant after some period of time. This time varies with all of us. Through listening to the Holy Spirit we get a sense when the time comes to change what we are

doing and to take another path that we may be called to follow. Only through listening to the Holy Spirit quietly through prayer and careful discernment can we come to a decision. Lent gives each of us a starting point each year to re-evaluate ourselves and our ministries. Our example is Jesus. Not only did He begin His public ministry on earth through fasting and prayer for 40 days, Jesus spent much of His time in quiet prayer and reflection throughout His ministry.

Each Lenten season, the Church gives us a definite opportunity to follow Jesus' example. Fasting is more than one full meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; perhaps we can offer your snack money to those in needs, or give up that chocolate, or that can of pop a day for Lent. Fasting provides opportunities to remove undue attachments of material things. Also, during this Lenten season make an effort to be more reverent. Jesus, although He is God, never placed Himself above the people He served. He took the time to help all who came to Him; Why not spend some time alone with Him in the Eucharistic Chapel; the simplest way to spend time is to just be there. Any sincere effort through fasting and a concentrated effort to be more intimate in our worship during this Lenten season can bring forth a renewed spirit to better and more humbly serve all those through our ministries.

God Bless!

Deacon Paul Tomaso



Upcoming Liturgical Dates

First Communion Sunday:

March 29th
9:00 a.m.; Noon; 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Taize' Prayer:

Tuesday March 31st 8:00 p.m.

Hospitality Minister Meeting:

Thursday April 23rd—7:00 p.m.

Karen's Corner

Lent is an excellent time to reflect on your own personal faith life. There are so many wonderful prayer and study opportunities offered at St. Stephens and the surrounding Archdiocesan Community.

I challenge each of you to do something different this lent to prepare yourself for Holy Week and the season of Easter.

Maybe you can strive to attend daily mass or the weekly Stations of the Cross. Or, could you spend an hour with Our Lord in the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel or at Taize Prayer? Another opportunity is to join an established FISH group.

I always find Lent to be a great time of reflection.
God Bless! Karen

Lenten and Holy Week Liturgies

Ash Wednesday—February 25th

6:30 a.m.

8:15 a.m.

Noon

4:00 p.m.

5:30 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

Stations of the Cross

Every Friday during lent 6:00 p.m.

Lenten Parish Communal

Reconciliation

Wednesday, March 11th, 7:00 p.m.

Holy Thursday

April 9th 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday

April 10th 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Easter Vigil

April 11th 8:30 p.m.

What does Lent Mean?

What do we find in the prayers of the Lenten season? Below are some of the prayers that we will hear during the Lenten liturgies. We learn that Lent is joyful. Every year the church gives us this season where we can prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery. During this season we can allow our hearts and minds to be renewed. Lent is a holy season. This is the season of grace. Our sacrifices for the season are a way of expressing our thanks to our God. Our sacrifices are a way to correct our faults and bring God to an ever present forefront of our minds.

The whole purpose of Lent is to bring us to the Holy Season of Easter. We have been preparing, by works of charity and self-sacrifice, for the celebration of our Lord's paschal mystery.

The prayer, fasting, and almsgiving we do during Lent have an Easter purpose. We do not fast during Lent because fasting is good for our health. Rather, fasting

helps us to realize our dependence; it helps us become aware of the needs of others; it empties us so that we can be filled with God's gifts.

We give alms for the same reason. This helps us to increase our awareness of the poverty of others, to become more detached from things and more focused on God.

The Lenten prayers are those of repentance and reparation. Our prayers also bring the image of Jesus to perfection within us. Lent reminds us that our lives are a journey of hope which is a fitting time as we all ascend to the holy feast of Easter.



History of Lent

Lent can be traced back to the end of the third century. Christians at that time were observing a 40-day period of fasting in commemoration of Christ's 40 days in the desert. Lent slowly evolved to a penitential season of preparation for Easter. By the fourth century, Lent also became the time of final preparation for the catechumens who would be baptized and brought to the Christian faith at the Vigil. Lent was also a time of reconciliation for those whose sins had separated them from God and the Church. In the fourth century those reconciliations took place on Holy Thursday, so that they could participate fully in the

Easter Vigil. As time progressed Lent became primarily a season of fasting.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for a restoration of the original meaning of Lent. Our priorities as a Church then have returned to the preparation of the catechumen's for Baptism and the renewal of all the faithful in their baptismal commitments. Our repentance during this season needs to be communal and public as well as individual and private. We need to examine our consciences, both as individuals and as parishes, communities, nation and Church.

46 days versus 40 days

There are 46, not 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. So how do we get 40? Every Sunday is the Memorial of Jesus' Passion, death and Resurrection. When we subtract those six Sundays of Lent that occur during the season we end up with 40 days.

Many ask if that means that the Sundays of Lent don't count—that we should indulge in the things we give up during the rest of Lent on those days? Of

course not! The Sundays of Lent are the heart of the Lenten Season. Although we don't have to adhere to our Lenten promises on Sunday, it makes sense to continue our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving on these days.

The Season of Lent is an overall exercise in grace.

Liturgical Minister Lenten Prayer

Your words, Lord, are spirit and life! Today, give me the inner quiet I need to hear your living word. Open my ears, my eyes, my heart to the good news of the Gospel. Help me to bring your word to life in all the places I go today. In the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.



Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is one of the starkest, yet one of the most loved days of the liturgical year by many people. It is NOT a holy day of obligation however individuals come to church to be reminded that they are dust, and to dust they will return.

In the early church this was a day of public penitents. The individuals would come to church wearing the penitential garment (sackcloth) and be sprinkled with ashes. They would then be turned away from the church for a penance of 40 days. They would return to the church on Holy Thursday where they would be

readmitted to the sacraments.

As time evolved the expulsion of penitents has disappeared, but the ashes remain and became a call of penance for all the faithful.

The practice of utilizing the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday was established during the twelfth century. It adds a reminder to us of where we are heading — the glory of Easter Sunday.

The Way of the Cross

Stations of the Cross or Way of the Cross refers to the depiction of the final hours or the Passion of Jesus. This tradition began with St. Francis of Assisi. The Stations of the Cross may be observed at any time during the year, but is most commonly done during the Season of Lent, especially on Good Friday and on Friday evenings during the Lenten Season.

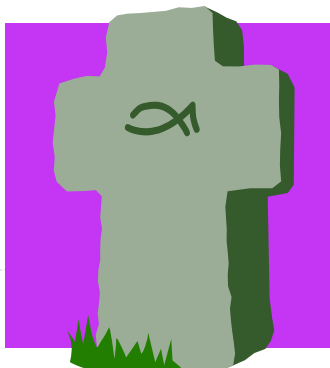
The object of the Stations is to help the faithful to make a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer, through meditating upon the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death.

There are many great resources available for praying the Stations of the Cross. Booklets can be found at your local Catholic Bookstore or online. Stations from the Perspective of the Blessed Virgin Mary can be located at Stationscross.com

The Stations themselves are usually a series of 14 pictures or sculptures that depict the following scenes:

1. Jesus is Condemned to Death.
2. Jesus Receives the Cross.
3. Jesus Falls the First Time.
4. Jesus Meets His Mother.
5. Simon of Cyrene carries the Cross.
6. Veronica wipes Jesus' face with her veil.
7. Jesus falls the second time.
8. Jesus meets the daughters of Jerusalem.
9. Jesus falls the third time.
10. Jesus is stripped of His garments.
11. The Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the Cross.
12. Jesus dies on the Cross.
13. Jesus' body is removed from the Cross.
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb and covered in incense.

Here at St. Stephen the Martyr our stations are held every Friday evening during Lent at 6:00 p.m. Please consider attending this powerful form of prayer.



Feast of Saint Joseph

March 19th, 2009 is the Feast of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and patron of the Universal Church. This feast day dates to the twelfth century.

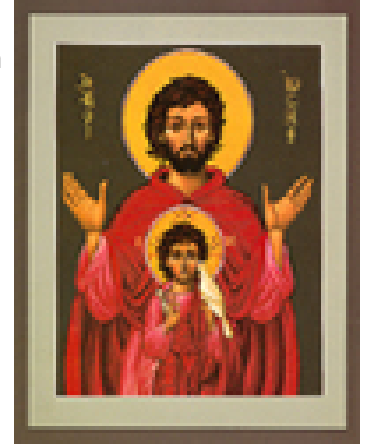
The entire Month of March is dedicated to Saint Joseph. There is an additional feast day for Saint Joseph the worker on May 1st.

We know that Joseph was a compassionate and caring man. He planned to divorce Mary but he was concerned for her suffering and safety.

We know that Joseph was a man of faith who was obedient to whatever God asked of him without knowing the outcome.

We know that Joseph loved Jesus. His one concern was for the safety of the child Jesus that was entrusted to him.

Joseph is the patron of the dying because he died with Jesus and Mary close to him. He is also the patron of the universal Church, fathers, carpenters and social justice.



Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ

Our Lenten liturgies are penitential. We give up the Gloria, our song of praise except on two feast days, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph (March 19) and the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25).

We sing a penitential gospel acclamation during the Lenten season. "Praise to You, Lord Jesus, King of Endless Glory, Savior of the World, Savior of the World."

The Alleluia is given up without exception. From the beginning of Lent until the Paschal Vigil, Alleluia is to

be omitted from all celebrations, even on solemnities and feasts.

Alleluia means "Praise Yahweh" or "Praise God". In early times it was only sung on Easter. Eventually it became a regular part of the liturgy.

The return of Alleluia becomes a powerful symbol and an unmistakable sign of Resurrection and joy at the Easter Vigil. It is proclaimed at the vigil: "I bring you a message of great joy, the message of Alleluia"

Internet Links

www.catholic.org

A comprehensive site with news, links, saints, directories and Scripture, it offers an easily searchable database.

www.catholic.com

One of the largest Catholic lay apologetics site, it also offers links to the original Catholic encyclopedia and "This Rock" magazine archives.

www.americancatholic.org

The homepage of the Franciscan magazine, St. Anthony Messenger, this site offers a sampler from e-cards to movie reviews to saint of the day.

**DO YOU HAVE A
FAVORITE INTERNET LINK WHERE YOU
RETRIEVE LITURGICAL OR CATHOLIC
INFORMATION?
LET US KNOW!**

**CHECK OUT PAST ISSUES OF THE
LITURGICAL FLAME AT
STEPHEN.ORG UNDER THE
LITURGY SECTION**

Ask the Liturgical Team?

After publication of the last newsletter, no questions were posed to the liturgical team. Please send your questions, and we will be happy to respond with some wonderful answers.

Q: What is the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord?

A: This feast day occurs on March 25th which is normally during the Lenten Season. This feast day however is truly part of the Christmas cycle of feasts. Exactly nine months before Christ's birth we celebrate this solemnity devoted to his conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Up until 1969, this was one of the observances of Mary—not Jesus. It was called the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. After 1969 the feast day shifted to Jesus.

Q: Explain what fast and abstinence are?

A: A day of fast is one on which Catholics who are eighteen to sixty years old are required to keep a limited fast. You may eat a single, normal meal and have two smaller meals as long as they do not add up to a second meal.

A day of abstinence is a day on which Catholics fourteen years and older are required to abstain from eating meat.

The biblical basis for abstaining from meat as a sign of repentance can be located in the book of Daniel (10: 1-3) "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia..." "I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over"

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of both fast and abstinence. All Fridays during Lent are days of abstinence.

**ASK THE
LITURGICAL
TEAM?**

**PLEASE SEND
YOUR
QUESTIONS TO
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NEXT NEWSLETTER SNEAK PEAK

**HOLY WEEK 2009
EASTER SEASON
PENTECOST**