

SAID ED March 9, 2014

Lent is here!

Lent has begun with the Ashes that we received upon our foreheads last Wednesday. I remind you that we abstain from meat on **all** the Fridays of Lent, and that both **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday** are fast days for us. This means that those of us who are healthy and are between the ages of 18 and 59 are instructed to eat sparingly - **two simple meatless meals and one main meatless meal**, with nothing in between.

The three pillars of the Lenten season are: fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

Fasting – or intentionally doing with much less – can be a great discipline in our well-fed American lifestyle. It helps us understand how small and vulnerable we really are. Allowing ourselves to feel hunger puts us on the ground floor of what it is to be humble. Humility is an important virtue for a person of faith. It takes us out of the center of our own little universe and allows us to be still for a moment so we may know God and know ourselves better.

Self-knowledge moves us next to **prayer**, which is open communication between us and God. Prayer is a two-way street, of course; we don't do all the talking. Exercising humility ought to enable us to do some thoughtful listening, and our prayer will be richer as a result. Such reflection also helps us become more conscious of the many ways in which we are blessed by our gracious God. Money, time, and talent – we truly have more than we need. That realization may lead us to greater generosity towards those who have less. We call this **almsgiving**.

Fasting has a long history within our Judeo-Christian tradition. It was during a forty day fast that Elijah heard the “still, small voice” of the Almighty. In the gospel passage that we heard on Ash Wednesday, Jesus advises us to be discreet while we fast. It should not be a way of advertising our austerity, he points out, but rather a private matter between us and God. The fast that Jesus undertook in the desert before he began his public ministry is the basis of our modern forty days of Lent. This calculation does not count Sundays because on Sunday, we are always celebrating resurrection!

We encourage one another in our efforts to live more simply, and we too, are to be nourished by the Word of God. This Lent, instead of giving something up, try doing something extra, like reading from scripture each day. Perhaps this is something you can do as a family: take a little time around the dinner table to read and discuss something from scripture before or after your meal.

AND why not begin your Lent this year by attending our Lenten Retreat which starts this weekend. Fr. Anthony Gittins will be presenting Monday – Wednesday at 10:00am and 7:00pm.

Have a good and growth-filled Lent!
