

St. Stephen Protomartyr Parish

2017 Lent and Holy Week Schedule

LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

- Ash Wednesday, March 1 Mass and Distribution of Ashes: 6:30 AM, 8 AM, 7 PM
- Stations of the Cross **Wednesday** Evenings at 7 PM
Friday Afternoons at 2 PM
- Palm Sunday, April 9 Outdoor Procession, weather permitting, at 10:30 AM Mass
- Holy Thursday, April 13 Morning Prayer 8 AM
Chrism Mass at Cathedral 10 AM
Mass of the Lord's Supper 7 PM
Night Prayer 9 PM
- Good Friday, April 14 Morning Prayer 8 AM
Stations of the Cross 3 PM
Celebration of the Lord's Passion 7 PM
Tenebrae 9 PM
- Holy Saturday, April 15 Morning Prayer 8 AM
- Easter Vigil, April 15 Celebration of the Great Easter Vigil 8 PM
- Easter Sunday, April 16 Masses at 8 AM and 10:30 AM

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

- Rice Bowls with Lenten Calendars
- Little Black Books
- Fr. Sean Martin Lenten Series March 9, 16, 23, 30 at 7 PM in the Parish Hall

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- Saturday Afternoons: 3 - 3:30 PM except March 25 and April 15
- Saturday, March 25 The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available at St. Stephen Protomartyr from 10 AM - 1PM. This is a joint offering by Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen Protomartyr. Priests are scheduled as follows: 10 - 11 - Fr. Ron; 11 - 12 - Fr. Carl; 12 - 1 Fr. Teater

We Are Transformed

By Sr. Melannie Svoboda

In the middle of Lent last year, I received a letter from a friend telling me why I was a blessing to her. The letter touched me deeply. When I called to thank her, she said she had decided to write letters to individuals during Lent (one each day) to thank them for their presence in her life. I thought: what a great Lenten observance!

As we embark on our Lenten journey this year, we might be asking ourselves: what am I going to do? Fortunately, the Church offers some help in this regard. Traditionally the Church suggests we do three things during Lent: fast, pray, and give alms. My friend's Lenten observance incorporated all three practices. She wrote a letter each day. Just imagine the "fasting" or self-discipline that went into that act: composing the letter, addressing the envelope, putting a stamp on it, and mailing it. My friend was praying too – for each person to whom she was writing. And she was giving alms, for she was reaching out in love to dozens of individuals, letting them know how much they were valued. And in the process, she herself was being transformed into a more thoughtful and caring person.

And isn't that the main reason we celebrate Lent? Because we, as sinners, are in need of transformation. We fall short of being Christlike in our time and place. That's why we plan some specific sacrifices for Lent. Such plans are good – as long as we also allow God to direct our fasting, praying and almsgiving. And how does God do this? Through the calls to selfless love inherent in our everyday life.

With this in mind, then, **how might we fast this Lent?** We might fast from the gossip in our workplace or neighborhood. We might fast from whining and complaining about everything that's wrong in our lives. And we might fast from self-preoccupation. Notice how each of these implies a corresponding positive action. Fasting from gossip means speaking kindly of others. Fasting from whining means appreciating what we have. And fasting from self-preoccupation means reaching out to others in need.

How might we give alms this Lent? We begin by remembering that almsgiving is essentially the *giving of ourselves*. So we might give a single mom an hour of free time, give an elderly neighbor a ride to his doctor, give a lonely person a listening ear, give another driver a break in traffic, give a few hours at a food pantry, give a smile to a weary store clerk, give our time and attention to a pressing social concern.

And finally, **how might we pray this Lent?** We can ponder the daily readings for Lent. Or pray while sitting at a traffic light or standing in line. We can pray while watching a sunset or while reading the newspaper.

No matter what we do for Lent, let's remember Jesus' words on Ash Wednesday: "When you fast, do not look gloomy." The underlying impulse for all our Lenten sacrifices must be gratitude and joy. After all, we believe the Risen Jesus walks with us every step of the way!

Melannie Svoboda, a Sister of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio, writes and gives talks and retreats nationally. Her books include *The Lord is my Shepherd*. To visit her blog "Sunflower Seeds" go to melanniesvobodasnd.org.