

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

MARCH 2025

With Easter at one of its latest dates possible (April 20<sup>th</sup>), we still are waiting for Lent to begin (and to fill up on paczkis the day before). Well, wait no longer, next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the Lenten season begins. The Lenten season is an age-old tradition in Church history, but unfortunately it has diminished in its meaningful practice. What do you remember about Lent growing up? What is remembered most often from childhood is having to give up something for Lent, often something that was very much enjoyed like candy. Thus, the observance of Lent often comes with negative remembrances.

So why do we have a Lenten season anyway? Well, much like we do in December when we observe certain practices like decorating and playing Christmas music, it is all about the hype in getting ready for Christmas day. Lent is observed, though in a more solemn manner, to get ready for the celebration of Easter, the most significant day in the Christian faith. So how do we get ready? Well, though we don't have as many family rituals as we do for Christmas, the practices of Lent are designed to come closer to God, something that we can easily drift from in this hectic time we are living.

The most common practices of Lent are centered on sacrifice (the giving up), increased spiritual activity and being more benevolent (Matthew 6:1-18 is where these are drawn from) for the purpose of becoming more focused on God and less on ourselves. Certainly, one is free in his/her individual faith to choose an observance that strengthens one's soul. The result of any such practices is to become more at one with God which ultimately then will lead to a new life to be celebrated. Often, when religious practices during Lent are required, when Easter is passed, a person goes back to the way they were. That renders the observance of Lent to a temporary ritual rather a life-changing experience. A meaningful observance of Lent leads one to make changes of lifestyle that are continued on after Easter and made a part of one's everyday life. These new practices have the power to do a spiritual makeover of one's soul leading to the new life in Christ of which Easter is all about.

This Sunday in worship before Lent begins, we will look at the Transfiguration that occurred to Jesus when He went up on the mountain to pray (Luke 9:28-36). Jesus entered something that was very special to Him - His time of prayer with His heavenly Father - and in so doing it led to His transfiguration. As we take the time to spend in prayer, Bible reading and meditation, we open the door for the Spirit to change us figuratively as Jesus was changed literally. As was the case for Jesus, the change is glorious and heavenly in nature. Heaven awaits each of us whenever we take the time to let it enter our lives. To do so is what Lent is intended to accomplish.

For your own Lenten experience, a daily devotional, *The Way, the Truth and the Life* inspiration from Henri J.M. Nouwen, is available for your daily reading and reflection. Nouwen is one of the foremost devotional writers of the last century. His readings provide depth to the Christian faith in a straightforward way of thinking. Maybe you have your own spiritual work with which you have been wanting to read, like maybe the Bible. Lent is a time to dedicate yourself to that reading. I would certainly invite you to the class on Wednesday mornings at 10:00a.m. when the passages for the upcoming Sunday are discussed in depth. Maybe you want to commit yourselves to being in Church each of the six Sundays of Lent. Whatever you might choose, the purpose is to draw closer to God. When one draws closer to the love of God, one will find oneself changed forever.

With love,

