

LENT 2007

Inside . . .

- Holy Family Parish Mission: Theme and Schedule of Events
- Lenten Messages from Pope Benedict XVI and Bishop William Weigand

Lent: The Glory of These Forty Days

Lent is a season focused on the renewal of baptism. We share the special Gospels of the season and take them to heart to experience the dying and rising and redemption that are the Paschal Mystery.

Lent is a season of penitential reflection during which we are inspired to practice a more Christian life. Lent shows us the example of Christ, and by fasting and penance, it enables us to share in His sufferings - something we must do to be able to share in His Redemption. Fasting is a part of the nature of the season, and like all the penitential practices of Lent, fasting is offered to God in union with the sacrifice of the Cross. Purple vestments are worn to remind us of the penance of Lent.

Always remember that we are not alone during this season. We belong to an immense body in which we are united with all of humankind looking forward to redemption by Christ.

Lent is also a season for spiritual development. It is shared with the entire Church preparing to celebrate the Paschal mystery. It is a time for continuing formation of children and adults alike. Holy Family continues the efforts of Catholic Faith Formation for our children, particularly those preparing for the celebration of Sacraments, while Bible Study, RCIA, Disciples on the Journey and other special programs offer formation for the adults of the parish.

The whole parish family is encouraged to take part in as many of the liturgical and social activities of the season. We are called to continuing conversion and to share in communal efforts to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

Stations of the Cross at Holy Family Church

Catholics have come together for centuries during lent to retrace the steps that Jesus took to win our salvation. Since the earliest days of the church, Christians have been telling the story of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. Pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem to see the sites where Jesus lived out the Passion, and they would follow in the footsteps of the Lord along the way of the cross as part of their pilgrimage visit.

The stations as we know them today came about as it became increasingly difficult, at times impossible, to visit the holy sites. In the 1500's, villages all over Europe started creating "replicas" of the way of the cross, with small shrines commemorating the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, these shrines became the set of 14 stations that are now utilized in almost every Catholic Church in the world.

Please join your parish family each Friday night at 7:00 p.m. as we follow the way of the cross. We will utilize a bilingual

setting of the stations as we unite to celebrate - the stations will be celebrated alternately (station to station) in Spanish and English, with the full text available in both languages for all stations. Holy Family is blessed with beautiful illuminated stained-glass windows depicting the stations. Come see, hear and feel the story of the Lord's Passion.

Each week after the Stations of the Cross we will gather in the school Fine Arts building for a simple lenten meal of soup and bread. Several parish ministries will be participating in this Lenten activity and will be responsible for providing and serving the meals. The first meal, this Friday, will be served by the Liturgy Council. See next week's bulletin for the remaining schedule.

(A live, outdoor re-enactment of the way of the cross, presented by our Youth Ministry, will be celebrated on Good Friday. More details will follow.)

ash
wednesday



The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. During the Ash Wednesday liturgy, in unity with Catholics around the world, we are signed with ashes. The ashes, which come from the burning of the blessed palms from Palm Sunday of the year before, are placed on our foreheads in the form of a cross, as a reminder of our baptism and as a call to Lenten baptismal renewal.

When we are signed with the ashes, we hear some version of these words: "Remember, man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return." Not the most cheerful words, to be sure - so why should we look forward to hearing them?

The words are a reminder to us all that no matter where we are in our life's journey, it is never too late (or too early) to reform, repent, and renew ourselves spiritually. So, then, these somber sounding words are actually full of joy - the joy of a "second chance", the joy of joining in Christ's glorious resurrection on Easter morning!

Ash Wednesday is this week, February 21st, and Holy Family Parish will celebrate the Ash Wednesday liturgy with the blessing and distribution of ashes in masses at 8:30 am, 10:00 am and 6:00 pm in English and 7:30 pm in Spanish.

RCIA: "The Rite Stuff"

Lent is a season of preparation - especially for the Easter initiation of catechumens into the fullness of the church. Lent is a time for the parish community to take part in the process by being a living example and participating in the Rite of Sending which leads to the Rite of Election. The community then takes part by celebrating the Scrutinies on three consecutive Sundays of Lent. Then we gather as a faith community to present the Creed and the Our Father - two great symbols of our faith. The presence of the elect in our midst and their dismissal before the Liturgy of the Eucharist give us a powerful sign of what initiation will mean - to join the Church, the body of Christ, in holy communion.

HOLY FAMILY PARISH MISSION 2007

Mission Theme - CONVERSION

INTRODUCTION: Masses on February 24-25

- Jesus Christ victorious over temptation and sin.
- We are tempted and constantly battle with making choices: "I put before you, life and death, a blessing and a curse... choose life."
- Jesus is presented to us by the Father as the Son that pleases Him and so we are called to listen to Him.
- The themes of the Season of Lent, especially those found in the Lenten scriptures, point to the need for conversion.
- Our reference is Jesus, the model and guide set for us by the Father. Lent is a privileged season of grace to take up with enthusiasm our calling to follow Jesus.

DAY ONE: **Monday, February 26, 2007**

Morning Session: Immediately following Daily Mass

Evening Session: 7:00–8:00 pm

JESUS, THE IDEAL SON THAT THE FATHER CALLS US TO BECOME

In his transfiguration, Jesus, praying with his disciples, was transfigured and, as in his baptism, was introduced by the Father as the Chosen Son. We too were chosen in Christ and indeed became his children through baptism. Jesus is the person that the Father has dreamed of us to become. Our reference as we ask God for the grace of conversion is Jesus.

DAY TWO: **Tuesday, February 27, 2007**

Morning Session: Immediately following Daily Mass

Evening Session: 7:00–8:00 pm

WE FULFILL OUR CALLING BY LIVING IN COMMUNION

Jesus summarized his teachings in his commandment of love, "Love one another as I have loved you... through this sign all will know that you are my disciples." We live out and fulfill our baptism in the Church, the Body of the Risen Christ, Communion of all brothers and sisters in Christ. Salvation or sanctity is never a private or individual pursuit. Love of God can never be separated from concrete love of neighbor.

DAY THREE: **Wednesday, February 28, 2007**

Morning Session: Immediately following Daily Mass

Evening Session: 7:00–8:00 pm

SIN AND CONVERSION

Our world is the result of individual decisions and the sum of human choices. The Gospel gives us indications of life and attitudes that can build the Kingdom of God. We are invited to make an examination of conscience, looking at the world, the wounded Body of Christ. The Father confronts us as he did to Cain: "where is your brother?"

DAY FOUR: **Thursday, March 1, 2007**

Morning Session: Immediately following Daily Mass

Evening Session: 7:00–8:00 pm

GOD OF COMPASSION THAT RESTORES US

Fundamental Christian experience of God's love that creates, forgives, redeems and re-creates us. Conversion in the model of Christ includes a conversion to each other in service, compassion and the thirst for social justice. By the grace, of God our conversion is brought to action in our lives.

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS, BENEDICT XVI, FOR LENT 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

“They shall look on Him whom they have pierced” (Jn 19:37). This is the biblical theme that this year guides our Lenten reflection. Lent is a favourable time to learn to stay with Mary and John, the beloved disciple, close to Him who on the Cross, consummated for all mankind the sacrifice of His life (cf. Jn 19:25). With a more fervent participation let us direct our gaze, therefore, in this time of penance and prayer, at Christ crucified who, dying on Calvary, revealed fully for us the love of God. In the Encyclical *Deus caritas est*, I dwelt upon this theme of love, highlighting its two fundamental forms: agape and eros.

God’s love: agape and eros

The term agape, which appears many times in the New Testament, indicates the self-giving love of one who looks exclusively for the good of the other. The word eros, on the other hand, denotes the love of one who desires to possess what he or she lacks and yearns for union with the beloved. The love with which God surrounds us is undoubtedly agape. Indeed, can man give to God some good that He does not already possess? All that the human creature is and has is divine gift. It is the creature then, who is in need of God in everything. But God’s love is also eros. In the Old Testament, the Creator of the universe manifests toward the people whom He has chosen as His own a predilection that transcends every human motivation. The prophet Hosea expresses this divine passion with daring images such as the love of a man for an adulterous woman (cf. 3:1-3). For his part, Ezekiel, speaking of God’s relationship with the people of Israel, is not afraid to use strong and passionate language (cf. 16:1-22). These biblical texts indicate that eros is part of God’s very heart: the Almighty awaits the “yes” of His creatures as a young bridegroom that of his bride. Unfortunately, from its very origins, mankind, seduced by the lies of the Evil One, rejected God’s love in the illusion of a self-sufficiency that is impossible (cf. Gn 3:1-7). Turning in on himself, Adam withdrew from that source of life who is God Himself, and became the first of “those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage” (Heb 2:15). God, however, did not give up. On the contrary, man’s “no” was the decisive impulse that moved Him to manifest His love in all of its redeeming strength.

The Cross reveals the fullness of God’s love

It is in the mystery of the Cross that the overwhelming power of the heavenly Father’s mercy is revealed in all of its fullness. In order to win back the love of His creature, He accepted to pay a very high price: the blood of His only begotten Son. Death, which for the first Adam was an extreme sign of loneliness and powerlessness, was thus transformed in the supreme act of love and freedom of the new Adam. One could very well assert, therefore, together with Saint Maximus the Confessor, that Christ “died, if one could say so, divinely, because He died freely” (*Ambigua*, 91, 1956). On the Cross, God’s eros for us is made manifest. Eros is indeed – as Pseudo-Dionysius expresses it – that force “that does not allow the lover to remain in himself but moves him to become one with the beloved” (*De divinis nominibus*, IV, 13; PG 3, 712). Is there more “mad eros” (N. Cabasilas, *Vita in Cristo*, 648) than that which led the Son of God to make Himself one with us even to the point of suffering as His own the consequences of our offences?

“Him whom they have pierced”

Dear brothers and sisters, let us look at Christ pierced in the Cross! He is the unsurpassing revelation of God’s love, a love in which eros and agape, far from being opposed, enlighten each other. On the Cross, it is God Himself who begs the love of His creature: He is thirsty for the love of every one of us. The Apostle Thomas recognized Jesus as “Lord and God” when he put his hand into the wound of His side. Not surprisingly, many of the saints found in the Heart of Jesus the deepest expression of this mystery of love. One could rightly say that the revelation of God’s eros toward man is, in reality, the supreme expression of His agape. In all truth, only the love that unites the free gift of oneself with the impassioned desire for reciprocity instills a joy, which eases the heaviest of burdens. Jesus said: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself” (Jn 12:32). The response the Lord ardently desires of us is above all that we welcome His love and allow ourselves to be drawn to Him. Accepting His love, however, is not enough. We need to respond to such love and devote ourselves to communicating it to others. Christ “draws me to Himself” in order to unite Himself to me, so that I learn to love the brothers with His own love.

Blood and water

“They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.” Let us look with trust at the pierced side of Jesus from which flow “blood and water” (Jn 19:34)! The Fathers of the Church considered these elements as symbols of the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Through the water of Baptism, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, we are given access to the intimacy of Trinitarian love. In the Lenten journey, memorial of our Baptism, we are exhorted to come out of ourselves in order to open ourselves, in trustful abandonment, to the merciful embrace of the Father (cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Catecheses*, 3, 14ff). Blood, symbol of the love of the Good Shepherd, flows into us especially in the Eucharistic mystery: “The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation ... we enter into the very dynamic of His self-giving” (*Encyclical Deus caritas est*, 13). Let us live Lent then, as a “Eucharistic” time in which, welcoming the love of Jesus, we learn to spread it around us with every word and deed. Contemplating “Him whom they have pierced” moves us in this way to open our hearts to others, recognizing the wounds inflicted upon the dignity of the human person; it moves us, in particular, to fight every form of contempt for life and human exploitation and to alleviate the tragedies of loneliness and abandonment of so many people. May Lent be for every Christian a renewed experience of God’s love given to us in Christ, a love that each day we, in turn, must “regive” to our neighbour, especially to the one who suffers most and is in need. Only in this way will we be able to participate fully in the joy of Easter. May Mary, Mother of Beautiful Love, guide us in this Lenten journey, a journey of authentic conversion to the love of Christ. I wish you, dear brothers and sisters, a fruitful Lenten journey, imparting with affection to all of you, a special Apostolic Blessing.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Diocese of Sacramento – 2007 Lenten Regulations and Admonitions

Another Lenten journey of further conversion will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 21. Lent prepares the faithful to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. It is a time for reflection and spiritual renewal, a time to examine one's relationships with God and with others. The Church also calls Catholics to a spirit of penance, above all to practice the "Acts of Religion": fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, "which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others."

I. FAST AND ABSTINENCE (self-denial). To foster the spirit of penance and of reparation for sin, to encourage self-denial, and to guide us in the footsteps of Jesus, Church law requires the observance of fast and abstinence.

Abstinence: All persons who have already celebrated their 14th birthday are bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

Fasting: Everyone, from the celebration of their 18th birthday to their 59th birthday, is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Voluntary fasting on other weekdays of Lent, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays, is highly recommended. Fasting is generally understood to mean eating one full meal each day. Two other partial meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken; but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids are allowed. Other forms of "fasting," especially regarding alcoholic drink, needless television, video games, internet use, and social entertainment, is of true spiritual value and is strongly encouraged. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, neither the law of fasting nor the law of abstinence obliges. If in doubt, one's parish priest or confessor may be consulted. Airport workers, travelers, and others while on board ships or airplanes are dispensed from the laws of fast and abstinence for the duration of their journey (except on Good Friday). It is desirable that they perform some other pious act instead.

II. PRAYER. In order to deepen one's love for Christ, Catholics are urged to read and pray over Sacred Scripture; to study the Catechism of the Catholic Church; and to participate in devotions offered by the parish; and to pray more fervently - individually, as families, and in common with others. The faithful are exhorted to pray the Rosary, to make private visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and to pray especially for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, for world peace, and for an ongoing implementation of the pastoral initiatives of the Third Diocesan Synod.

Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation: Lent is a privileged time for celebrating this sacrament. Parishes generally make readily available the Sacrament of Penance, including its communal celebration. In this way, the social and ecclesial aspects of sin and reconciliation, as well as one's personal reconciliation with God may be underscored. People should attend also to reconciliation in every aspect of human life - personal, familial, societal, and ecclesial.

Lenten Mass Schedule: Daily Masses during Lent are so scheduled so as to facilitate the attendance and spiritual growth of the faithful. The faithful are urged to attend Mass on weekdays as often as possible.

The Stations of the Cross are celebrated publicly in each parish on Fridays during the Lenten season. Parishioners are urged to participate.

III. ALMSGIVING. The act of giving to the poor, in the most ancient tradition of the Church, is an expression of penance, a form of piety, a witness of fraternal charity and an expression of Lenten conversion. Therefore, all Catholics are urged to support generously the charitable works of the Church, including ordinary stewardship to their parish; generous response to the 17th Annual Catholic Appeal for Catholic Charities; pledge redemption to the Preserving Our Past, Building Our Future campaign; and contribution to the Diocesan Food Bowl. People are also encouraged to assist the sick, the aged, the needy and the imprisoned in other ways.

As we pursue our Lenten pilgrimage of faith and climb the holy mountain of Easter, may God direct our steps to himself, and show us how to walk always in his way.

WILLIAM K. WEIGAND
Bishop of Sacramento