

Mar. 17-18, 2018

Thoughts from the pastor,

Last week my letter was all printed up with a note on a possible change to the Mass schedule. More negotiating happened after it was printed so we just printed over the top of it, "DISREGARD". Now you can disregard all of the warning for change. The change that we came up with will not change the schedule, only who is going to have certain Masses. So the extra Mass on Friday evening's during Lent is only for Lent. There will still be a communion service on Monday mornings and Mass on Monday evenings. It is just that once a month I will be having the Monday evening Mass so Fr. Don doesn't have to rush back from his prayer group meeting in Schuyler. I can handle that.

Are you having a good Lent? You might think that is a pleasant conversation starter but there is more to that question than most people would think. Many of us would think that having a good Lent has to do with having been able to attend a couple of days of recollection or even a parish mission and been uplifted by the experience. That truly is a good thing to do but if you think about the fact that Lent is a preparation for our participation in the Passion and death of Jesus during Holy Week, then being uplifted does not correspond to the purpose. If we are like many of our brothers and sisters in different Protestant denominations, then feeling good might be terrific, for many of them don't participate in Holy Week like we do as Catholics. Even the crosses in their churches are different for they are not crucifixes. They focus on Easter and have the tendency to slide over the suffering part, like Passion Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

This came up when the movie "The Passion of the Christ" came out. Many non-Catholic Christians were astounded. They had never contemplated the suffering of Jesus. As Catholics we are encouraged to meditate on the Stations of the Cross. I grew up with that and it has been a big part of my Lent. I am sorry to say that many Catholics have abandoned that practice. I can only hope that they are at least watching the movie.

So the question about whether you are having a good Lent becomes something different than feeling good. Many of you are suffering from the death of a loved one, a serious illness, a major disappointment, a broken marriage, unemployment, or other hardships. These are some of the things that could really make your Lent a powerful experience, but only if you understand it correctly. If you are constantly blaming God and living in anger at the idea that God is not taking care of you and making your life on earth a continuous heavenly bliss, then you are missing the point. If you are meditating on how this hardship is similar to part of what Jesus was suffering, then you are closer to the real meaning of Lent. If you are realizing that Jesus' Passion is His participation in your suffering because of His love of you and how He wants you to know that He is always willing to be with you in any hardship, then you are even closer. Take them both together and you are having a good Lent.

The bond that comes from sharing a hardship is one of the most powerful things that Jesus is trying to show us as he shows us His wounded heart. The image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is His way of showing us how powerful His love really is. It is not about feeling good in the sense of giggles and smiles. It is a love that comes from being there with each other when times are bad and working together to carry the crosses of life until we reach the resurrection, having shown that we really understand what love is about. This means that it might feel strange to ask a person if they are having a good Lent, for it would be like asking them if they are suffering any hardships. The better question might be to ask what they are praying for and assuring them that you will take their petition to heart.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank