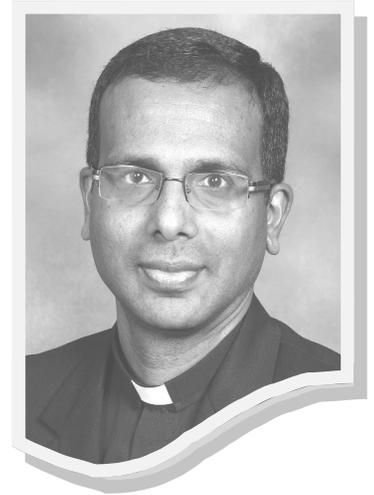




From the Pastor



Lent Is Here

We have just begun the Season of Lent, with the Ash Wednesday observances that were held on March 6th. It is a time of journey, accompanying Jesus into the desert—fasting, praying, and almsgiving. The desert is not anything new to us, as we live pretty much in a desert. A desert gives the least distraction and helps us to focus on God.

Remember to find some extra time for prayer during this season to focus on what the season is all about. Try going to a weekday Mass, our Lenten Parish Mission from March 24th to the 27th, Eucharistic Adoration, the Stations of the Cross, reading Scripture daily, and/or spending some time in personal prayer. You can be truly happy and prepared to celebrate the Passion, death, and resurrection of Christ only when you have spent time with him. Also, have a special jar on your dining table this season of Lent to put in your savings from the sacrifices you make every day of Lent, and then when Easter comes, give the savings to God and the needy.

The most important thing anyone can do for Lent is to “return to the Lord with your whole heart” (Joel 2:12). That is the root meaning of repent—to turn around. Catholics have traditionally expressed sorrow for sin and the desire to live as genuine Disciples of Christ through the three traditional Lenten disciplines of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. These Lenten disciplines prepare us to receive the grace of Easter. These disciplines are aimed at purifying and transforming our lives—to help us rise with Christ to the challenges of self-giving love.

Fasting is the most powerful spiritual discipline of all Christian disciplines. Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform our lives. Fasting helps us spiritually and physically. Fasting is one of the most neglected spiritual practices today. Yet, it is the most effective means to get rid of our stubborn evil inclinations and habits. It is a great tool to self-discipline. Jesus himself fasted and taught His disciples about fasting. Fasting is a time when we abstain from food or other pleasures, and take the time to focus on God. Denying something physical to glorify God and go deeper with Him is the spirit of fasting. It is a way to demonstrate that we are serious about our relationship with God.

To aid us in this, the Church requires us to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Anyone over the age of 18, but under the age of 60, should eat only one full meal on those days. The Church also invites us to practice abstinence. It means anyone 14 years or older must abstain from meat on all Fridays. The USCCB allows the substitution of some other forms of penance for abstinence on all of the Fridays of the year, except the Fridays in Lent.

—Fr. Jose Thomas

Community of St. Francis of Assisi,

Thank you very much for this time that I was able to spend with you. As you may already have heard, I was appointed as Pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Madras. My last weekend here at St. Francis is March 16–17.

Please, keep me in your prayers, as you will be in mine.

—Fr. Victor