

From the Pastor's Desk

Once again I find myself at the end of a very full week and there are so many things upon which I would like to reflect; however, do to limits on time and space, especially this week, I will limit myself to only a few.

First, I would like to reflect upon our need to continually pray for our Pope, Holy Father Francis, especially during this period of time when he is dealing with some significant health concerns. As you pray, I would ask that you do not become tempted to follow the misrepresentations of certain media outlets that would have the pope on his deathbed and the Church on the verge of a conclave during which the 267th pope of our Catholic tradition would be elected. The fact is that the pope is seriously ill. He is battling the complications of double pneumonia and another serious infection. He is indeed experiencing significant health concerns *at the time of this writing* which means quite frankly that he needs to be the object of our vigilant prayer. In a world that is prone to exaggeration and fanaticism, we need to stay focused and realize that the Holy Spirit remains in charge as does the Vicar of Christ, Pope Francis. May God provide him with the healing, courage, and strength that he requires to prevail in this hour of need.

Second, I would like to draw attention to the fact that during this coming week that the Catholic community begins the Lenten Season. On this insert, you will find a listing of all the spiritual opportunities for growth offered by our parish during this holy and penitential period. I challenge all of you to make the most of this Lent. It is so easy for God to take second place in our lives because of the busyness that the world sets before us – all things that are passing, all things that will eventually cease to exist. In the coming forty days we have the opportunity to reorient our lives **to make Christ first**, exactly where he should always be. *We all know that we could be more intimate in our dealings with Christ.* As we prepare to enter into Lent, perhaps we can ask what is holding us back, and through practices of prayer and penance, we can “hit the mark” and enter more deeply into the process of conversion. God

wants to be so close to us. This Lent, may we have the courage to let the One who truly loves us into the deepest corners of our lives.

Third, and finally, I simply ask that we continue to attempt to be charitable with one another and build one another up as we journey together toward the fullness of God's Kingdom. We are all in this together and Christ is with us in our brokenness as well as in our moments of great success.

Lenten Opportunities for Spiritual Growth

Prayer Partners: Those individuals who submitted their names this past weekend will be matched with a prayer partner for Lent. You may pick up your prayer partner either after Mass on Ash Wednesday or after the weekend Masses.

Daily Mass: Masses are celebrated every weekday during Lent at 12:05 PM unless otherwise noted on the front of the bulletin.

Tuesday Rosary: As is the case throughout the year, the Rosary is celebrated every Tuesday at 6:00 PM in the Church.

Eucharistic Adoration: As is the case throughout the year, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will occur following Mass on Wednesday Evenings and Friday Afternoons

Prayer Groups: There will be two prayer groups this Lenten Season. One will be facilitated by our deacon candidate, John Fontana on Thursday Evening at 6:00 PM and the other will be facilitated by Fr. John on Friday afternoons at 2:00 PM. Both will be held in the Elizabethan Suite, and both will deal with the Jubilee Year theme of Hope as it unfolds in the Scriptures and in our lives. Please join us for one or both of these wonderful opportunities for prayer and faith sharing.

Stations of the Cross: Stations of the Cross will be celebrated every Friday during Lent at 3:00 PM in the main body of the Church.



CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION CLEARANCES

As mentioned last weekend, all Visitation Parish volunteers are required to obtain, renew, or update their child and youth protection at this time. In the main vestibule of the Church, you will find a checklist of the items that are required for compliance so that you may continue to function as a liturgical minister or to function as a volunteer for a parish event. It is especially important that all ministers and volunteers begin the process of either obtaining or renewing their clearances ASAP (this is especially important for our volunteers for the Lenten Fish Fries). If you have any questions or need assistance with obtaining or renewing your clearances, you may contact Catherine Bennett, the parish secretary, and she will be willing to assist you. Thank you for your cooperation. PLEASE KNOW THAT IF YOU ARE IN THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING OR RENEWING YOUR CLEARANCES, YOU MAY CONTINUE TO VOLUNTEER.

PARISH SURVEY

Please complete the following questionnaire and return it by way of the collection next weekend. REMEMBER TO BE COMPLETELY CHARITABLE IN YOUR RESPONSES.

- 1. What are the greatest strengths of Visitation Parish?**
- 2. What are the greatest possible areas for growth for Visitation Parish? What are your ideas to help facilitate them?**