



# Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## How We Can Let Lent Change Our Lives

*Preparing to Enter the Easter Season With Newness of Life*

What does Easter mean to us as a people of faith? “Easter is a new beginning,” Fr. Paul Ferguson says. “With Christ’s resurrection life changed forever!”

As we prepare to celebrate the greatest mystery of our Faith during the Easter season, the Church gives us the season of Lent. It is a time for preparation, a time for us to consider where we are in our faith lives, how we want to move forward, and how we want to live in this new beginning.

“Lent is a time for us to step back and give ourselves time to reflect on our relationship with God,” Fr. Paul says. “It is an opportunity to take spiritual inventory, to consider, ‘Where am I at and where is God calling me to be?’”

In other words, it is a time for conversion — turning toward God and working to deepen our relationship with Him. Beyond that, Lent offers us an opportunity to move forward in our faith journey with focused intention.

“Lent is time for a conversion of heart, but it is not a one-time conversion,” Fr. Paul says. “Conversion should happen continually for us throughout our lives. As we continue to grow richer in our faith, we build on what we have and where we are in our relationships with God.”

Practically speaking, Lent calls us to intensify our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In doing so, we unite ourselves more closely with Christ and His mission. We



disconnect from the things of this world and more fully connect with Christ.

“We live in a world that is so fast and noisy,” Fr. Paul says. “Lent gives us the opportunity to take time away from the noise and give it to God in contemplation and prayer. We also need to look at our lives and reflect on the parts of our lives that need to change. Bring those things to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.”

Additionally, we fast. Fasting is not just about giving up food. Rather, it involves giving up anything in this world that creates a disconnect between us and God.

“Fasting encourages us to change bad habits,” Fr. Paul says. “We don’t have to just give up food. Our fasts could

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## *Our Stewardship Response to the Eucharist,* **GOD'S ULTIMATE GIFT**

**T**he Eucharist, often referred to as the “Source and Summit of the Christian life” in Catholic theology, stands as the ultimate gift from God to His people. It is in this sacred sacrament that Catholics partake in the Real Presence of Christ, an encounter that nourishes our souls and strengthens their faith. In light of this profound gift, stewardship emerges as the natural response to God’s boundless love.

Stewardship is not merely a call to manage our resources wisely; it is a way of life, a spiritual path that reflects our gratitude for the gift of the Eucharist and our commitment to live in accordance with its transformative power.

The Eucharist, at its core, is a divine act of selflessness. In the Last Supper, Jesus took ordinary bread and wine and offered them as His Body and Blood to His disciples. This selfless act, which is mirrored in His ultimate sacrifice on the cross, serves as an enduring reminder of the depth of God’s love for humanity. In response, stewardship compels us to emulate this selflessness. By recognizing that all we have ultimately belongs to God, we are called to use our resources, time, and talents to serve others selflessly. Stewardship, then, is a living testament to the selfless love embodied in the Eucharist.

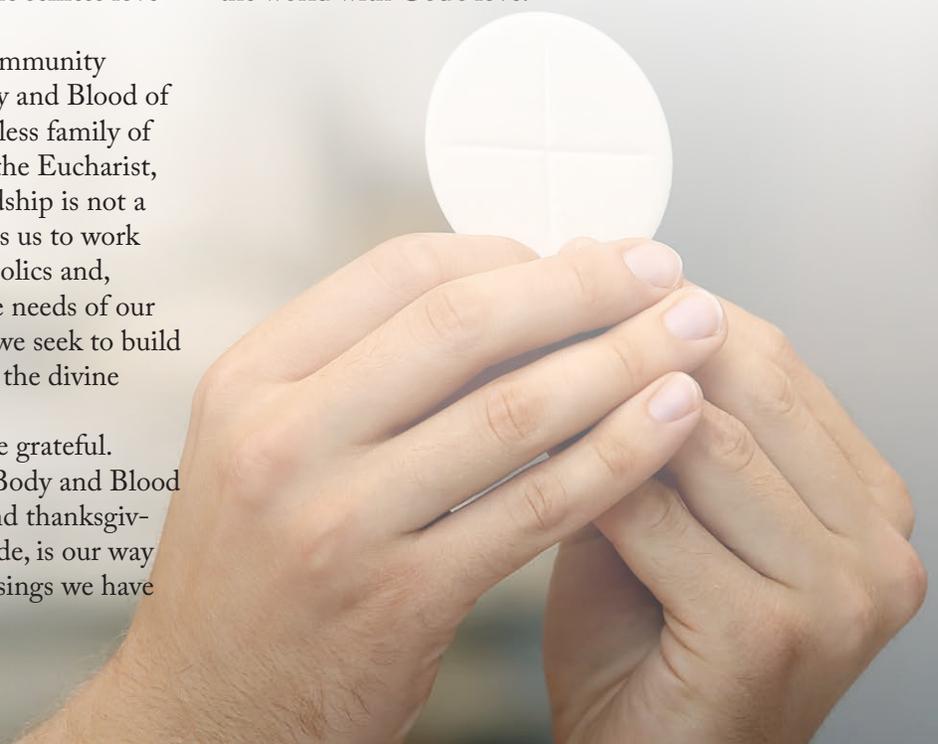
The Eucharist fosters a deep sense of community among Catholics. As we partake in the Body and Blood of Christ, we become part of a global and timeless family of believers. This sense of community, born in the Eucharist, parallels the essence of stewardship. Stewardship is not a solitary endeavor, but a collective one. It calls us to work together, to join hands with our fellow Catholics and, indeed, all people of goodwill, to address the needs of our communities. In this spirit of togetherness, we seek to build God’s kingdom on earth, just as we share in the divine communion of the Eucharist.

Moreover, the Eucharist teaches us to be grateful. When we approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we do so in an attitude of profound thanksgiving. Stewardship, as an expression of gratitude, is our way of giving back to God for the countless blessings we have

received. We recognize that all we have, whether it’s material wealth, skills, or time, are gifts from God. In gratitude, we commit to using these gifts wisely and for the betterment of others.

The Eucharist is a celebration of transformation. As Catholics, we believe that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, ordinary bread and wine are transformed into the divine. Similarly, our response to the Eucharist should lead to a personal transformation. Stewardship is a means by which we become more Christ-like, more selfless, and more compassionate. It is through stewardship that we, as individuals and as a faith community, seek to live out the teachings of Christ, becoming beacons of love, justice, and hope in a world that often hungers for such transformation.

As the Eucharist is the ultimate gift from God, stewardship is our heartfelt response to that gift. By embracing stewardship, we acknowledge the selflessness, community, gratitude, and transformation inherent in the Eucharist. Stewardship is not a burden, but a joyous calling — an opportunity to reflect God’s love and to bring Christ’s message to life. In the spirit of the Eucharist, let us strive to be faithful stewards, sharing our blessings and transforming the world with God’s love.





## THE JOY OF LENT

Dear Parishioners,

**H**ave you ever thought about the joy in sacrifice that Lent provides? Most of us don't delight in sacrifice; in fact, in our daily lives, we often do our best to avoid challenges and practices that push us outside of our comfort zones.

In Christianity, there is a beautiful irony between joy and sacrifice, and we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this uniquely during Lent. In one of his Lenten messages, Pope Francis shared, "Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty."

While giving up sweets in favor of healthy snacks for Lent is a common and noble endeavor, the goal of Lent should not only be a spiritual excuse to lose weight! In choosing acts of self-denial, we are saying "no" to things in order to get into the practice of saying "no" when inclined towards sin, ultimately deepening our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Victory can be found when we deny ourselves and pick up our crosses and hardships in order to grow closer to Christ!

Therein lies the joy. When we grow closer to God by denying our will, we say "yes" to a life of abundance with Him. Our God is a benevolent God; He will not hold back His grace from those who honor Him and choose challenging



things to grow and give Him glory. Christ even tells us Himself, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Without question, Lent is a time for conscious penitence and spiritual preparation for Easter. And it is important to remember that God loves us whether we make Lenten changes or not. At the same time, Lent provides us an opportunity to make God a greater part of our life, and to take our faith to new levels. Stewardship is a God-centered way of life — a spiritual way of living that, above all, acknowledges God's presence in all we do.

Lent is a time for every one of us to do more than simply deny ourselves; we need to welcome God into our lives in greater ways so that when we get to Holy Week and Easter, we have an even greater appreciation for the sacrifice the Lord made for us. Talk about pure joy!

May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and joyous Lenten journey.

In Christ,

*Fr. Paul Ferguson*

Fr. Paul Ferguson

*Pastor*

# FEED MY SHEEP

## *Bringing Christ's Compassion*



*Feed My Sheep supports more than 500 families per month, which amounts to 1,600 to 1,700 individuals.*



*As Christians we are called to "feed the hungry" — it is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy.*

In 2023, more than 47 million people were food insecure. Unfortunately, many of them are children. In our area, Feed My Sheep serves people throughout the county who are low-income, senior citizens, unemployed, disabled veterans, and anyone who is in need. As Christians we are called to “feed the hungry” — it is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy. Jesus commanded Simon Peter three times to “feed my sheep.”

Lois Schnarr enjoys serving people in the county who are most in need. She brings donated items from Our Lady of Hope to Feed My Sheep and also helps out at the distributions on Thursdays and Saturdays. About 25 years ago, Lois visited Feed My Sheep while volunteering for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. The “bigs” were helping the “littles” see how important it is to volunteer. Lois saw the good work they were doing and wanted to get involved.

“It really makes you feel good to help those in need,” says Lois. “You get more by what you give than what you receive.”

Lois estimates that Our Lady of Hope has been supporting Feed My Sheep for about 20 years. There are totes in the back of church for the collection. Some of the most needed items are macaroni and cheese, fruits, spaghetti noodles, and spaghetti sauce. All non-perishable food and monetary donations are appreciated.

Feed My Sheep has been serving more people recently as new people in need have moved to the area. Of course, that means more items are needed. Lois hopes parishioners will continue to be generous to Feed My Sheep to support the increased need. The organization supports more than 500 families per month, which amounts to 1,600 to 1,700 individuals.

About eight people from Our Lady of Hope help with the monthly drive-through distributions. The organization started this model during COVID-19.

“The people that come through are so thankful,” Lois says. “You can tell they really need this extra help to make it through the month.”

Feed My Sheep tracks people to make sure they are only coming once per month. The organization ends up having to purchase about 4,000 pounds of food per month.

# FEED MY SHEEP:

## *Donation to Our Neighbors in Need*

They rely on donations from churches and local organizations. The more they receive, the less they have to purchase.

“When you support Feed My Sheep, you are doing God’s work,” Lois says. “You can feel good knowing that you are doing what He has commanded us to do.”

In addition to her involvement with Feed My Sheep, Lois serves the parish as a greeter. In the summer, she helps with landscaping and cleans the church once a month. Being a part of our parish family has been a beautiful part of Lois’s life.



*In our area, Feed My Sheep serves people throughout the county who are low-income, senior citizens, unemployed, disabled veterans and anyone who is in need.*

*You can donate to Feed My Sheep in the back of the church.  
Food items are always appreciated to support those in need.*

## How We Can Let Lent Change Our Lives

*continued from front cover*

include giving up television or social media or any number of other things that can get in the way of our relationships with God. As you consider what to give up, think about what God is calling you to work on in your life. What will make you a better person and allow you to better communicate with God?”

Lastly, the season of Lent calls us to give alms.

“Almsgiving involves giving of ourselves,” Fr. Paul says. “We give of our time, talent, and treasure to help others. How can we do that better throughout Lent and then make that a new habit moving forward?”

As we enter the season of Lent and consider how best we can live it out, Fr. Paul encourages us to keep our relationship with God front and center.

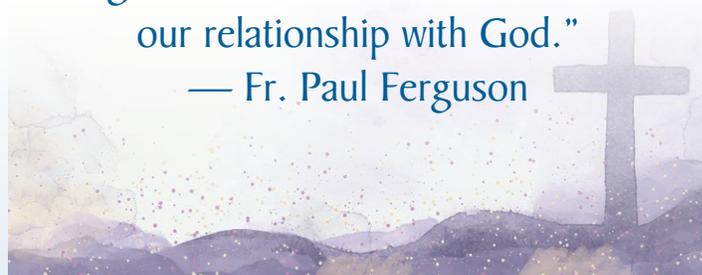
“We need to consider what will allow us to connect with God in a deeper way,” Fr. Paul says. “The things we do throughout Lent should change our lives and move us forward in our relationship with God. Then, when it is time to celebrate the Easter season, we can do so with greater joy — more fully

aware, more fully engaged, more fully committed to be the disciples Jesus wants us to be!”

May this Lent be fruitful for all of us. May we live Lent with intention and enter the Easter season with newness of life!

**“We need to consider what will allow us to connect with God in a deeper way. The things we do throughout Lent should change our lives and move us forward in our relationship with God.”**

**— Fr. Paul Ferguson**





## Celebrating the 2025 Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church

### *Pope Francis Declares Theme, “Pilgrims of Hope”*

The Catholic Church’s 2025 Jubilee Year, themed “Pilgrims of Hope,” offers Catholics worldwide a profound opportunity to deepen their faith and rekindle their relationship with Christ. A Jubilee Year, rooted in the biblical tradition of restoration and renewal, is a special time set aside by the Church to foster spiritual growth, encourage reconciliation, and celebrate God’s abundant mercy. Declared by Pope Francis, this Holy Year is an invitation for all Catholics to embrace hope as a guiding light in their spiritual journey.

At the heart of the Jubilee Year are pilgrimages, particularly to Rome, where the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica will be opened as a symbol of God’s grace. Walking through the Holy Door signifies a passage into a renewed life with Christ. In his apostolic letter introducing the Jubilee, Pope Francis emphasizes the need for hope in a world marked by challenges, encouraging the faithful to rediscover their role as witnesses of Christ’s love and mercy.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) echoes this sentiment, urging American Catholics to see the Jubilee Year as an opportunity for renewal and a deeper commitment to discipleship. The bishops have outlined several ways for Catholics to participate in the Jubilee, including pilgrimages to designated shrines across the United States, special liturgical celebrations, and communal acts of prayer and service. The USCCB also encourages parishes to focus on Eucharistic devotion, as

the Jubilee aligns with the National Eucharistic Revival, emphasizing the transformative power of the Eucharist in Catholic life.

Special events and devotions will highlight the year. Many dioceses will host local pilgrimages, mission retreats, and reconciliation services to inspire spiritual renewal. Parishes are encouraged to organize events fostering community and prayer, such as Eucharistic processions, adoration, and acts of charity. These activities aim to remind the faithful of their call to stewardship and their role in building up the Body of Christ.

Catholics across the United States can celebrate the Jubilee Year in their daily lives by embracing discipleship and stewardship. Engaging in regular prayer, receiving the sacraments, and participating in acts of service and charity can deepen their connection to Christ. Families might consider creating home altars, praying the Rosary together, or reading Scripture to mark this holy time. Small groups or parish ministries can focus on themes of hope and renewal through study and discussion.

Ultimately, the 2025 Jubilee Year is a call for all Catholics to walk as “Pilgrims of Hope” — to rediscover the joy of the Gospel, renew their faith, and strengthen their commitment to Christ. By participating in the Jubilee’s spiritual and communal opportunities, the faithful can grow closer to God and embrace their mission as stewards of His hope in the world.

*For more information on Jubilee 2025, visit the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Jubilee page at [www.usccb.org/jubilee2025](http://www.usccb.org/jubilee2025)*

# Christ Renews His Parish

## *A Powerful Opportunity to Grow in Vitality as a Faith Community*

The Lord calls all of us to deeper communion with Him, but sometimes it can be difficult to figure out exactly how to answer that call. Christ Renews His Parish is an opportunity to renew our relationship with God and discover all the ways to live out our faith. This weekend retreat can change lives and open hearts to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Juan Ramirez serves as the spiritual director for the Hispanic groups and has seen Christ Renews His Parish bring vitality and faith back into parish life.

“This is a very powerful retreat for women and men to renew their faith and relationship with Christ,” Fr. Juan says. “This retreat also helps people to feel that they belong to the parish. They feel that there is a place for them to share their gifts and talents with the community.”

A Spanish women’s retreat and a men’s retreat will be offered this year. Each retreat begins on a Saturday morning and ends on Sunday afternoon. Parishioners who have attended the retreat before will share how the retreat impacted their lives. The retreat will have time for prayer and Eucharistic Adoration as well as the Rosary, Mass, and Reconciliation. Deepening your faith alongside fellow



*Christ Renews His Parish is an opportunity to renew our relationship with God and discover all the ways to live out our faith.*

parishioners also provides a valuable opportunity for fellowship, which is crucial in strengthening and supporting spiritual growth.

“This coming retreat offers an opportunity to reconnect with our Lord and also with the community,” Fr. Juan says. “This retreat has impacted many lives in our community. Many people who have attended this retreat are now involved in different ministries in our parish. After the retreat people feel that they belong and have a place to share their gifts and talents.”

The planning team meets weekly for two to three months prior to preparing for the retreat. Volunteers even knock on doors to invite more people to this

transformative retreat. The team leads the retreat, but donations are needed for food and drinks. The women’s retreat will be held on March 22 and 23, while the men’s retreat is scheduled for July 12 and 13. The cost is \$25 but the fee will be waived if it prevents anyone from attending. Parishioners can register or ask questions of the volunteers after Mass.

“We hope and pray that through this retreat people will have a powerful experience and feel that they belong to our parish,” Fr. Juan says. “Hopefully, through this experience, our parish will keep flourishing with more disciples of Christ willing to be witnesses of the Gospel.”

*To register for the Hispanic Christ Renews His Parish Women’s or Men’s Retreat, look for volunteers after Mass to sign up or contact the parish office at 812-254-2883.*

*Our Lady of* **HOPE** CATHOLIC CHURCH

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