



*From the desk of Fr. Cyril Offiong, SDV*

## LENT: A JOURNEY OF GRACE, RENEWAL AND MISSION

*'Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God, For he is gracious and merciful' (Joel 2:12-13)*

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Ash Wednesday, together with the whole Church, we will impose ashes on ourselves as a symbol of humility, penance, and self-restraint and begin the sacred journey of the forty days of Lent. It is my deepest desire that, as a parish family, we will all live this Lent actively, not passively, by engaging in the spirit, activities, and rituals of this season. Lent is truly a **Season of Grace as we allow the mercy of God and our humility to draw us deeper into the heart of God.** For us Catholics, Lent can often become a mere annual ritual that we subject ourselves to. When approached in this way, miss the grace and renewal that should come with Lent. And so, the Church offers us the **Three Pillars of Lent** to guide us on this journey. They are:

**Prayer:** the raising of the mind and heart to God, deepens and increases our relationship with God. One of my favorite descriptions of **prayer is "the breathing of a Christian."** As a human body survives on breath, so a Christian Soul survives on prayer. The Holy Mass, the greatest and highest form of prayer and worship, Eucharistic Adoration and stations of the Cross are important ways to deepen our prayer life.

**Fasting:** by denying ourselves food and other bodily nourishment, we increase and deepen our yearning for God. While all are encouraged to fast, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 have an obligation to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This traditionally means having one full meal a day and two smaller meals that may add up to a full meal. Along with fasting, Catholics who are 14 years and older are encouraged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and on all Fridays of Lent. **Fasting is not limited to merely skipping of meals.** We can and should fast from other things and activities that have the potential of weakening our relationship with God. We offer up these small sacrifices to strengthen our souls and focus our hearts on the Lord.

**Almsgiving:** I can certainly testify to the generosity of many of you our parishioners, with the food and donations for the poor that you contribute every month. During this Lent, I encourage everyone to consider **the generosity of time and presence.** Let us also give alms by volunteering our time within the Church, in the community and for our neighbors.

During Lent, we often speak about **"giving up something for Lent."** When done with purpose and intention, helps us grow in our faith and life with God. I want to renew my call, last Lent, to also practice the way of **"taking up something for Lent"** such as adding one or more weekday Masses to your schedule or any other practice that can help your spiritual growth. In this way, these forty-days of Lent will not simply be a time of restriction, but a privileged and transformative journey toward Easter.

My fellow pilgrims on this Lenten journey, let us remember that we do not make this journey alone. We walk together as a community, supporting one another through shared prayer and fellowship. I encourage you to check our parish calendar for opportunities for spiritual growth, including our **Eucharistic Adoration Campaign** from 8am – 6pm, every Thursday of Lent (Come Let us Adore the Lord Together), the **Stations of the Cross** every Friday of Lent at 7pm (Come let us walk the way of the Cross together) and our **Communal Penitential Service** on Wednesday March 11, 2026 at 6:30pm (Come let us seek God's mercy together).

**May this Lent be a time of deep spiritual renewal for us as a parish family.**