

FROM FATHER JOHN: *“Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment.”* (Joel 2:12 – 13)

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned!



This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Season of Lent. We will have mass with the distribution of Ashes at 8:00 am and 7:00 pm. We will also have Prayer Services with the distribution of Ashes at 12-Noon and 5:00 pm. The Ash Wednesday Schedule, and the entire Lenten Schedule, can be found on our parish website at www.stannchannahon.org.

Lent is an important time in the life of the Church and in the life of every baptized Catholic. Lent gives us the opportunity for spiritual and interior renewal. We are invited, by God and the Church, to train ourselves spiritually in order to grow in love for the Lord and in love for one another.

The Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen said this about Lent.

"We can think of Lent as a time to eradicate evil or cultivate virtue, a time to pull up weeds or to plant good seeds. Which is better is clear, for the Christian ideal is always positive rather than negative. A person is great not by the ferocity of his hatred of evil, but by the intensity of his love for God. Asceticism and mortification are not the ends of a Christian life; they are only the means. The end is charity. Penance merely makes an opening in our ego in which the Light of God can pour. As we deflate ourselves, God fills us. And it is GOD's arrival that is the important event."

Lent can be challenging. In fact, it should be challenging for the simple fact that change is always challenging. When we repent of our sins it necessitates that we amend our lives and open our hearts, minds and souls to conversion. This brings about spiritual renewal and spiritual growth which allow us to truly become disciples of our Lord Jesus, to give witness to God's love and mercy to a world that is desperate for love and mercy.

Lent is a time of spiritual transformation. St Thomas Aquinas wrote that virtue is the transformation of instinct or passion. Courage and hope, for example, are transformations of the aggressive instinct; love is the transformation of desire.

During Lent, we make a deliberate effort to pray, fast and give alms in order to grow in love, to grow in faith, to be made whole in the image and likeness of God, to attach ourselves to the Lord Jesus, and to reach out in love to the poor, the downtrodden and the vulnerable.

Lent can be challenging, even difficult at times, but as we look toward Easter, as we look to the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, we find the strength to continue our Lenten journey; to continue to give alms, to make sacrifices, and to spend more time in prayer.

May God bless you and all those who love the Lord.



Let today be the
day you give up
who you've been
for you who can
become.

—
Blessed Ash Wednesday