



Lent 2018

Ash Wednesday, February 14th

6:30 a.m. – Mass (Sacred Heart)

9:00 a.m. – Mass (Sacred Heart)

5:30 p.m. – Mass (Sacred Heart)

7:00 p.m. – Misa en Español (Sagrado Corazon)

Ashes will be distributed at all Masses

Lenten Weekday Schedule

Tuesday

Mass – 8:00 a.m. (Sacred Heart)

Wednesday

Mass – 8:00 a.m. (Sacred Heart)

Thursday

Mass – 8:00 a.m. (Sacred Heart)

Friday

Mass – 8:00 a.m. (Sacred Heart)

Stations of the Cross – 5:30 p.m. (English)

Friday Night Lenten Dinner – 6:15 p.m. (Parish Hall)

Stations of the Cross – 7:00 p.m. (Spanish)

Saturday

Confessions – 3:00 p.m.

Mass – 4:30 p.m. (Sacred Heart)

Sunday

Mass – 8:15 a.m. (St. Anne, Cottonwood)

Mass – 10:00 a.m. (Sacred Heart)

Mass – Noon (Spanish – Sacred Heart)

From the Pastor

Not surprisingly, many people go through a phase in their life when they may drift away from the church for a while. Perhaps it has just been the distraction of trying to get along in life, the difficult demands of job or children, or just simply getting out of the habit of going to church regularly. Lent is the perfect time to make new beginnings and to re-engage ourselves in faithful Mass attendance and the practice of our faith.

Regular attendance strengthens our souls and, as a side effect, seems to make the rest of our life more fulfilling. Families find that regular worship together helps to bond them more closely and heal the small hurts and problems that can accumulate and weaken relationships. For teens and young adults who may have lost contact with their faith for a while, it is a time to renew and reinvigorate themselves in the faith-filled practice that will help them get through the difficult times for their entire life. As St. Paul tells us, “now is the appropriate time, now is our time of salvation.”

Some people may be scared that they have been away too long or done something so awful that they can never come back. Nothing is further from the truth. *There is no unforgivable sin*, no person who is destined to be lost. The gospel stories are full of the many ways that Jesus seeks the lost, the forgotten, those who feel like outcasts. He willingly and purposely leaves the ninety-nine faithful in search of the one lost sheep. He is like the father of the Prodigal Son who, upon seeing his son still far off, *runs* to greet him and hug him closely and cries with joy at his return. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.

Regardless of why you left or got out of the habit of going to Mass, you can always come home and return to the practice of the sacraments and the fullness of relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church he founded. If you have any questions or concerns, please call the parish office to make an appointment to see me.

--Rev. Eric Flores, Pastor

Bring to God Whatever Burden Hinders You



If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?

Romans 8:31–32

It's not that hard to admit that we need God's help in this life. Only the most proud or the most foolish believe they are truly self-sufficient. Yes, we need God. Yes, we can seek from God whatever we need—help, comfort, or guidance. But actually taking the step toward God can be not only difficult but complex. A lot of things can get in the way.

Pain: It's possible to be in so much pain that we cannot move. We are paralyzed, numb, almost without sense. So we do nothing but remain in our deep hurt.

Shame: We can't come to God and tell lies at the same time. This spiritual process requires that we face our embarrassments, shortcomings, failures, and sins, and the shame of all this holds us back.

Anger: It really is all right to come to God angry, but many of us don't feel that it's alright. We're deeply disappointed in God—for not rescuing us from a situation, for allowing us to suffer loss, for not giving us what we wanted—and that anger prevents any steps in God's direction.

Fear: We may fear punishment. We may fear God's disapproval. We may fear that God won't act or say what we're hoping for. And we may fear that, in coming to God, we'll need to change in some way.

How do we overcome these obstacles? How do we come to God when pain, shame, anger, or fear is blocking the path?

Remember one simple fact: God is for us, not against us. God waits for us, eager to help with our pain, shame, anger, or fear. The only thing to do is step forward and bring to God whatever burden hinders us.

From Ashes to Ashes: The importance of Ash Wednesday

Among the most beautiful, meaningful and solemn ceremonies of the Catholic Church is the gathering of the faithful on Ash Wednesday.

This special day begins our Lenten journey. It is the start of 40 days of prayer, penance and almsgiving as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. But why does Lent begin on a Wednesday, and what is the significance of ashes?

“On the Wednesday before the first Sunday of Lent, the faithful receive the ashes, thus entering into the time established for the purification of their souls. This sign of penance, a traditionally biblical one, has been preserved among the Church’s customs until the present day. It signifies the human condition of the sinner, who seeks to express his guilt before the Lord in an exterior manner, and by so doing expresses his interior conversion, led on by the confident hope that the Lord will be merciful. This same sign marks the beginning of the way of conversion, which is developed through the celebration of the sacraments of penance during the days before Easter.”

That Lent evolved into a period of 40 days in length is not surprising as there are numerous biblical events that also involved 40 days. Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving instructions from God for that number of days (see Ex 24:18); Noah and his entourage were on the Ark waiting for the rains to end for 40 days and 40 nights (Gn 7:4); and Elijah “walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb” (1 Kgs 19:8). Mostly, though, the 40 days of Lent identifies with the time our Lord Jesus spent in the desert fasting, praying and being tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1-11). “By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert” (Catechism, No. 540).

There is, therefore, evidence that by the end of the fourth century Christians were participating in a 40-day Lent before Easter. The dilemma now became how to count the 40 days. In the Latin Church, six weeks were used to identify the Lenten period, but you didn’t fast on Sundays, so six Sundays were subtracted and there remained only 36 fasting days. In the early seventh century, St. Pope Gregory I the Great (r. 590-604) resolved this situation by adding as fast days the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday before the first Sunday of Lent. Thus the Lenten 40-day fast, or the Great Fast as it was known, would begin on a Wednesday.

Initially, people fasted all 40 days of Lent. They ate one meal a day and only an amount of food that would sustain survival. But the Church taught, and people believed (then as now), that fasting is not about what we eat, it is about changing hearts, interior conversion, reconciliation with God and others. It’s about living in an austere way, giving from our abundance to the poor.

How Can We Hear the Cry of the Poor During Lent?

Hearing the cry of the poor starts with desire and a few choices. If we recognize a desire to be more attentive to the poor and to grow in solidarity with them, then it is likely that this is a grace we have received. Many things may have happened to open us to this grace, but it is important to name it and welcome it. God has been offering us this grace for some time and perhaps is preparing us to receive it this Lent. If we don’t feel this desire, we can ask for it. We can ask our Lord to help us grow in a desire to better hear the cry of those most in need. Who are the poor? Who are most in need? Who are pushed to the margins of neglect and powerlessness? It doesn’t take a great social analysis to come up with some immediate answers, locally in our own world and across the globe. Listening to the news is a beginning. Who is suffering? Who is tremendously burdened? Poverty doesn’t always make the news, but being sensitive to the stories we do hear is a place to start



Praying On the Road to Calvary

Living the way of the cross is inevitable. The Lenten journey begins with a reminder of our own mortality: “From dust we came and to dust we shall return.” Not one of us, as they say, escapes this journey alive. Death is the universal end of our earthly lives, and every one of us, if we live long enough, dies smaller deaths along the way.

These are the moments that can most try our faith—the fears, grief, and failures that pockmark the road and cause us to stumble or to crumble. An accident. A cancer diagnosis. Abuse. Betrayal. Divorce. Broken dreams. Every one of us carries a burden, often in secret. We put on a brave face.

We cry out to God—and we sometimes wonder if God hears. In this we are in exalted company. The Lord Jesus himself cries out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) As Jesus shares our burden of death and the fearsome prospect of being abandoned by God, he also lights the path of hope: “...those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:25).

How do we pray to and with Jesus when we feel we’ve lost ourselves? Some have suggested that one of the most potent prayers we have at our disposal is also one of the simplest: “Help!” When my mother died at 53 after a short and brutal battle with leukemia, I was in a dark hour and discovered for the first time what it means for someone to pray for me. A wise pastor reminded me that when I could not pray, my brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ could pray instead.

Our Catholic heritage offers us refuge in knowing that all the saints, living and dead, can lift up prayers on our behalf. We have the devotional prayers of our tradition—the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Memorare, and the book of Psalms—which give us words for the times when we have no words of our own. We also have silence. “Silence is God’s first language,” teaches St. John of the Cross. In our dark hours, it can be enough to lift our sufferings in wordless silence to God.

Lent ends with an empty tomb and the resurrected Messiah whose triumph promises our own resurrections. May our prayer this Lent unite our suffering with the Lord’s suffering so that we can find in him the life he promises.

Catholic Lenten Practices

Prayer: We know the importance of prayer in our lives – as individuals, as families, and as a community. Prayer is especially important during Lent. The Lenten season is a time for reflection, evaluation, and repentance. Lent calls us to a personal conversion and renewal – to a recommitted life in Christ so that we might not just celebrate Easter forty days later but also feel the risen Christ alive in us and in the world. This means prayer. During Lent we set aside time for prayer that is reflective in nature and reveals places where we have failed to open ourselves to God.

Almsgiving: The Church calls us during Lent to be especially conscious of the needs of others and to act accordingly. Giving materially to another is an act of Christian charity known as “almsgiving.” During Lent, the Church also calls us to first convert ourselves and then to transform the world for justice, so that we might serve the Kingdom which Jesus lived and preached.

Sacrifice: Fasting and abstinence are not sacrifices for the sake of pain or vain discomfort. Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice is not a Christian virtue. We are asked by the Catholic Church to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and not to eat meat on the Fridays of Lent. Feeling an empty stomach, or fighting the urge to have that juicy steak or candy bar does more than just remind us that for some people an empty stomach is their daily bread. Fasting and abstinence help us to ask ourselves the question: “What sustains me and gives me life?” What nourishes me on my journey of life? We will find the answer, not in the steak or the candy bar, but at the end of these forty days of Lent – in the Resurrection of Jesus. We fast and abstain because, when we do, we are reminded of who we are – followers of the risen Christ.

As Catholics, we joyfully engage in Lenten disciplines because we are disciples. We pray, give, and sacrifice because we follow Christ, who loved us so much that gave his own life so that we might share in Eternal Life.

