



*strengthening our faith*

*by rebuilding our heritage*

February 2024

My dear parishioners,

Lent is almost here! It begins on Ash Wednesday, **February 14**. The Lenten season is filled with many challenges and opportunities. The greatest of these is not to turn it into solely an individual journey, but to recognize it as a journey that we share with our faith family, the Church. Lent is for the Church, the people of God who make up the Mystical Body of Christ; as such, **we journey as one**.

As we start our Lenten journey, I would like to share a brief **reflection from Pope Francis**.

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk. Whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.

In the life of every Christian after baptism, there is the experience of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who called me to follow him and share in his mission. I must try to discover in my heart the living memory of that call, when Jesus passed my way, gazed at me with mercy and asked me to follow him. This means reviving the memory of that moment when his eyes met mine and he made me realize that he loved me.

*Jesus, help me draw closer to you and respond generously to your call.”*

—Pope Francis, “Take a Step Towards Jesus,” from “Renew our Hearts: A Personal Invitation to Lenten Conversion by Pope Francis,” All Saints Press 2016

### **We Need Lent, and We Need You**

**We need Lent this year.** We are challenged as a nation. In our deeply divided country there is a great need for civility, dialogue, and peaceful expression of concerns. Respect for one another and a willingness to dialogue and to learn from one another are essential. There is no other way if we are to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the future is unknown, this much is certain: the high priority that St. Matthew’s Cathedral Parish has longed placed on serving **the poor, the homeless, the marginalized** and advocating on their behalf will not change. Nor will our commitment to reaching out to **immigrants and refugees**, documented or undocumented, or to fighting **racism and sexism**, or to forming our **young people** in the faith.

We are challenged as Catholics, and as members of the Cathedral family. The pandemic is over but Mass attendance is still down. Where are the missing? Still afraid of COVID? Attending Mass closer to home? Feeling apart from God, not feeling a need for him? Not recognizing the importance of the Eucharist? Not seeing Jesus as our nourishment, our life, our way, our guide on our journey to eternal life? We wait, pray, and hope. But we still question. **Where is Jesus in all of this?**

As Christians we believe that **Jesus shared his life with us**; he is our friend, brother, and companion. This is the hope that awakens us each day. This is the power that spurs us on with enthusiasm. This is our hope: to live in light, in the light of Jesus.

We need Lent this year more than ever.

And **we need YOU!** We are not the parish we can be without YOU. To those who have not returned, we MISS you. We NEED you. **Together we are the Body of Christ.** We are the presence of Jesus to one another. I miss seeing you. I miss your smiles, your hugs, your caring concern.

**We need a renewed personal encounter with Jesus.** We must remember that **Jesus IS here**, next to us, reaching out to us with open arms. Jesus is our only real hope. We look to the future, with Jesus. We work together towards a **renewed Church** right here in our midst. Let us join together this Lent in prayer and fellowship, reaching out to our brothers and sisters in the community—those hurting or in need, survivors, those who feel hopeless or abandoned. **Let us join together with Jesus.** Let us not waste this Lent, a season of grace and of hope leading to new life and resurrection! Now is indeed the acceptable time to hear the call to move on from darkness to new life.

### **Thank You, Muchas Gracias, to our Faithful Supporters**

I thank all who continue to support our parish. You recognize that **we cannot meet our daily challenges without your financial support.** Thank you for helping to heat our cathedral, to support three choirs, and to provide 17 daily Masses, 6 Sunday Masses, and confessions each week with the paid assistance of extern priests. Thank you for providing for so many people needing food, clothing, and shelter and for maintaining the staff who support and lead our ministries, keep you up-to-date, and keep the Cathedral and rectory office operating.

Your response gives me **great hope** of keeping up with our budget needs. I know you will continue to respond, as **sustained giving is key to our survival as a parish.** Jesus is our ultimate hope, but we are his hands and feet in our homes and workplaces, and in the public square. Let us recognize this truth. All are called to commit to **good stewardship**, giving generously, recognizing that all is gift, all is grace.

Are you among the two-thirds of our parishioners who have not given a recognizable gift to the parish? If so, I ask – will you please **begin to give** something from what you have? We need ALL our members. Please, determine what you can give, and **enroll in Faith Direct.** Sign up online at [membership.faithdirect.net/enroll/DC284](http://membership.faithdirect.net/enroll/DC284) or call Pam Erwin at 202-587-5150.

I am so grateful and sincerely appreciate and continue to count on your support.

### **Lenten Liturgies**

There is no better way to heed the clarion call of Lent than to join the Church in the **celebration of the liturgies.** The prayers and readings—**the Liturgy of the Word**—and **the Liturgy of the Eucharist** give us the strength and guidance to journey through the desert to the empty tomb of promise, to rise with Christ on Easter Sunday after having been plunged into his death at our Baptism. If we journey with integrity, then we will arrive at the tomb and see the future, and, indeed, **share in his resurrection.**

On **Ash Wednesday, February 14**, we will wear the sign of penitence as a reminder of the need for our inner conversion, for the rending of our hearts, not our garments, and for our return to the Lord our God. (Joel 2:13). On Sunday, **February 18**, our catechumens and candidates will travel to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to participate with Cardinal Gregory in the Rite of Election. Please keep these men and women in your prayers.

**Stations of the Cross** will be celebrated on Fridays of Lent at 6pm and Sundays (in Spanish) at 2pm. Our regular confessions will continue—weekdays, 11am to Noon and Saturdays, 4 to 5pm. On Tuesday, **March 26**, at least 8 priests will be available for confessions at our 12:10pm Communal Penance Service.

### **Know Someone Who Is Looking for Something? Maybe It's God**

Enclosed is our Lenten brochure—please pick up extras in the Cathedral next weekend, for family, friends and co-workers. Please also take advantage of the opportunity during Lent to **reach out to people** who you know have drifted from their faith. Will you think about people in your life who might appreciate an invitation to come back to Church, for prayer, Mass or the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Please keep the staff and me in your prayers and be assured of my prayers for a blessed Lent.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Rev. Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson  
Rector