

My dear parishioners,

When Cardinal McElroy became our Archbishop last year, he said this: “As your pastor, an essential element of my mission is to encounter the hearts and souls of the disciples who form our local Church.” During this past year, he has met with all the priests and three representatives from all of our parishes. Just recently he issued a summary report on the consultations with lay leaders and the pastoral priorities that had resulted from that effort and the input of the priests. The number one priority is “fostering a parish culture which piercingly invites people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.”

With that as a background our Cathedral Parish will begin the Season of Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18. As we start our Lenten journey, I want to share a brief reflection from Pope Francis (Lent 2016), because it points directly to the Cardinal’s first priority:

“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 long 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.

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. **Together we are the Body of Christ.** We are the presence of Jesus to one another. To those who have not been coming regularly, 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. Thank you for providing for so many people who need 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 ParishSOFT.** Sign up online at giving.parishsoft.com/App/Giving/FD-284 or call Laura Palacios at 202-587-5150.

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

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