



strengthening our faith

by rebuilding our heritage

February 2010

My dear parishioners,

So much has happened since Christmas, and so much *will* be happening in the next two months!

January Events

Early last month I participated in the Cathedral Ministry Conference at St. John's Cathedral in Milwaukee. It was a terrific learning experience, especially the informal networking. Later in the month we had a very busy week of the March for Life. I was thrilled to have visits from two good friends. Bishop Bill Lori of Bridgeport, who brought over 100 teens, celebrated our Respect Life Mass and I gave the homily. Later that day, Cardinal Seán O'Malley joined us for lunch with the faculty and seminarians of Blessed John XXIII Seminary near Boston and toured the new rectory, reminiscing about the days when we worked together on staff here. Three of the seminarians are parishioners—Rudy Salinas, Alejandro Diaz and Ken Gill. After the Mass, Fr. Evelio and Teresa Volante led a parish group on the March for Life, witnessing against the evil of abortion. During January, our parish family also helped to ease the plight of the Haitian earthquake victims with prayers and donations to two special collections totaling almost \$30,000. Thank you! Muchas gracias!

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17! This year Archbishop Wuerl invites us to join in a Lenten spiritual journey to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation or, as we traditionally say, "go to Confession." (2007 Pastoral Letter, *God's Mercy and the Sacrament of Penance*). Let's reflect on the following quotes from the Pastoral Letter:

Why is it so difficult at times to be good and to do what is right? Even though we may have good intentions, why do we often find ourselves doing what we know we should not do or failing to do the good we know we ought to do? These perplexing questions arise from our awareness that a part of us is determined to do good while at the same time an element within us continually turns away from the good we know we can do. (p. 2)

Yet we are not lost. We are not left to our own devices. Saint Paul, writing to the Corinthians, reminds us that just as in Adam sin was introduced into the world and, through sin, death and all of its consequences; so, too, the resurrection of the dead came through a human being. As in Adam all people die, so in Christ all shall be brought to life – a fullness of life, a new creation already beginning in us through grace (cf. 1 Cor 15). (p. 2).

This is the message we proclaim when we face the mystery of sin, the reality of original sin and the problems of the human condition that lead us to personal sin. Just as Adam brought sin, death, disharmony, confusion, disruption and struggle into our lives, so too now Christ, the new Adam, gives us grace, redemption, new life and salvation. It is in Jesus Christ that we now find the beginnings of the new creation. He leads us back to the Father, overcomes the tragic alienation of sin and restores harmony. . . . (pp. 3-4)

The sacrament of Reconciliation is the story of God's love that never turns away from us. It endures even our shortsightedness and selfishness. Like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, God waits, watches and hopes for our return every time we walk away. Like the son in the parable, all we need do to return to our Father is to recognize our wrong and seek God's love. Jesus continues to speak to us of our noble calling to holiness and of his loving forgiveness. He offers us reconciliation if we ask for it. (p. 8)

The Archdiocese has produced an easy-to-read brochure on how one goes to confession, including the words to the Act of Contrition. Copies are available in the Cathedral and on the Archdiocesan website at www.adw.org.

Beginning with the first full week of Lent, three priests will be available every Wednesday in the Cathedral from 6:30pm to 8:00pm for Confessions in English and Spanish. We will still have our regularly scheduled Confessions on weekdays from 11:00am to 12:00 Noon and on Saturdays from 4:00pm to 5:00pm. On Tuesday, March 30, at our Communal Penance Service, 20 priests will be available for individual Confessions in English, Spanish and several other languages following the brief penance service that begins at 12:10pm.

Lenten Prayer, Fasting & Almsgiving

The Stations of the Cross will be celebrated on Ash Wednesday (3:00pm in English and 8:00pm in Spanish), Fridays (6:00pm in English), Sundays (in Spanish at 2:15pm) and on Good Friday at 7:30pm (in English). Join us for this beautiful devotion, which is particularly fitting for Lent. As you pray, please remember our candidates and catechumens. The tradition of Lent began, in part, as a way to help form adults desiring to join the Church. We will welcome many of them

with the sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. They need your prayers as they continue their journey to the sacraments.

Ash Wednesday (February 17) and Good Friday (April 2) are days of fast and abstinence. All Catholics who have reached their 18th birthday and are less than 60 years of age are bound to observe the fast, by which they are limited to a single full meal during the course of the day. All Catholics who have reached their 14th birthday must observe days of abstinence, during which no meat may be eaten. Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence.

Lent also is a time to be mindful of the least among our brothers and sisters. Our parish again is participating in Catholic Relief Services' Operation Rice Bowl. Please be sure to pick up a Rice Bowl and Lenten Calendar at Mass on the weekend of February 13-14 or 20-21. Visit orb.crs.org to find videos and other information about the difference your Lenten prayers, fasting and sacrificial donations make in the lives of our brothers and sisters in need. We also are conducting the Archbishop's Appeal, which is intended for the relief of the *immediate* needs of those most vulnerable in the Archdiocese. Reaching out to the poor in our midst is exactly what Jesus asks of us. If you were not able to donate last year, please consider a sacrificial gift this year. Those in need will be most grateful. Pledge envelopes are available in the pews.

Faith Formation Offerings

This Lent, the Cathedral will offer special opportunities to grow closer to God. Our Lenten Lecture Series will focus on "The Lenten Liturgies and Our Lives." The five-part series will include talks on the Symbols and Traditions of Lent, the Catechumenate, the Lenten Scriptures, the Holy Week Liturgies, and Lenten Music. It will begin Wednesday, February 24, and will be held every following Wednesday and Thursday of Lent in the North Conference Room. Wednesday lectures will be given from 12:45pm to 1:45pm, and Thursday lectures will be given from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. (The lecture on Thursday, March 18, will be given in the Great Hall.) Join us for our annual Lenten Day of Recollection on Saturday, February 27. Franciscan Father Russel Murray returns with St. Francis of Assisi as his guide to reflect more deeply on our Lenten journey of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The retreat will begin at 9:00am in the North Conference Room and will conclude with our 12:10pm Mass. All are welcome! Please RSVP to Heather Kinney at 202-347-3215 x530 or hkinney@stmatthewscathedral.org.

Did you know that St. Matthew's offers a five-week preparation program for adults who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation? We invite all baptized adult Catholics who have received First Eucharist but not Confirmation to take advantage of this great opportunity! Sessions will be held on Thursdays, April 15, 22, 29 and May 6, 13 from 7:00pm to 8:00pm with a retreat on Saturday, May 15. We will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday, May 23. For more information or to register, please contact Heather Kinney (contact info above). (*This preparation is only for those baptized Catholics who celebrated their First Reconciliation and First Eucharist as children. For others, please contact Heather Kinney to discuss participation in the RCIA process.*)

Lenten Music & Supporting Our Music Offerings

Special music events include an Evening Prayer that features the music of Hildegard Von Bingen (St. Hildegard) on Friday, February 26, with the Schola from Resurrection Church in Burtonsville, MD, Laetare Vespers with our own Schola on Sunday, March 14, a very special evening of the Rachmaninoff Vespers with the Choral Arts Society on Thursday, March 18, a Lenten Organ Recital with Russell Weismann on Friday, March 19, our traditional Tenebrae Service on Wednesday of Holy Week, and our Good Friday Reflections on the Seven Last Words with The Very Rev. Frederick J. Tillotson, President of Washington Theological Union, and the Schola Canorum. Visitors and parishioners alike have come to expect beautiful music at Cathedral liturgies and concerts. Even with the participation of many volunteer parishioners, providing a high level of music at the Cathedral depends on the significant financial support of parishioners. If you appreciate the music program and would like to make a special gift as we prepare for Lent, please use the enclosed pink envelope.

Parish Support

Finally, enclosed you will find an envelope for donations to aid us with the cost of flowers and decorations for Easter. Your donation will be greatly appreciated. Please drop it in the collection basket or mail it to the Rectory. Also, thanks to those of you who signed up for our electronic giving program. This program benefits you and the parish, and I ask you to please give it your serious consideration. Give me a call and tell me to sign you up!

The Lenten season is always a very busy one around the Cathedral. Please keep my staff and me in your prayers, and be assured of my prayers and personal best wishes for a blessed season of Lent.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson, V.F.
Rector