

Lent a Season of Joy

All too often many people overemphasize the penitential dimension of the Lenten season and deny themselves of its intended purpose, **Joy!** From the signing our foreheads with ashes, abstaining from meat on Fridays, fasting, almsgiving, prayer and the celebration of the stations of the cross, all are intended to bring about joy and newness of life! The purpose of our Lenten activities is not just an exercise in self-denial, self-mortification, or self-imposed punishment to generate feelings of remorse for our sins. To repent means **to turn**, to turn to God and others so as to bring about a **new way of living** that eradicates sin, brings hope to those suffering and lifts up the poor. Jesus' intention wasn't to merely share in our suffering, but to raise a fallen world to the joy of everlasting life!

Here are some helpful hints that may help you “enjoy” your Lenten observance and to truly rejoice in the glory of the Resurrection:

1. Think of your ashes as a sign that you are consciously living for others, like Christ, so as to help lift all to newness of life.
2. When you abstain from eating meat, think of someone deprived of the Eucharist or those who have fallen away from true Communion with the Church, the Body of Christ.
3. When you fast, present a gift for the hungry, a donation for the poor (through the House of Charity) or a contribution to the Food Pantry.
4. When you give alms, try to personalize your gift by remembering those who are suffering or the name of a needy person(s).
5. When you pray, try to include those persons whom you consider your enemy and try to remember the sick (especially those listed in our bulletin).
6. When attending the Stations of the Cross, be mindful not of your own sinfulness, but of intentionally walking up to Calvary with Jesus for the forgiveness of all.
7. When kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, ask Christ the High Priest for an increase in priestly vocations to administer the sacraments of life.
8. Finally, when celebrating Mass try to incorporate steps 1-7 in your personal Mass Intention perfecting your sacrifices with Christ's.

May the intentions of your Lenten observance bring blessing upon blessing to the world so that all may have joy and fullness of life!

Fr. Paul