

*During Lent the Pastor's Letters will be from our Holy Deacons.*

Lent has always been a time of sacrifice. For me, the kind of sacrifice has changed over the years—perhaps for you, too. When younger, it was often giving up something simple—perhaps no dessert or candy. The things we give up may change as we grow, but unless we think about “why” we’re giving up what we are...well, what we get out of it may not benefit us so much. Lent, although penitential in nature, is not intended to be a period of chastisement. Instead, like Advent, it is intended to be a time of *preparation* and *formation*.

Starting with the third Sunday in Lent, we begin what are known as “The Scrutinies” for those in RCIA who are preparing to join the Church at Easter, those we refer to as “the Elect.” For them, this time is referred to as the “Purification and Enlightenment” period, ultimately intended to help them—who are hopefully already living out their Catholic faith—to focus on a life of continuous conversion. The *Ritual Text for Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*, paragraph #128, states that these Scrutinies are to “strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good” and to “uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful.”

I don't know about you, but to me, this sounds like good advice for us all as Catholics— not just the *Elect*, and not just in Lent. While it may be a little late this year to restart our Lenten commitments, maybe it is not.

Let's look at our Lenten lives with the Scrutinies in mind, take a little time to identify behaviors in ourselves that are not befitting a good Catholic, then seek to drop them—as well as to find those that are *upright, strong, and good*, and then build upon them. If, like me, you've got too many of the former and too few of the latter, then let's pick one or two and make that our goal. If we stumble, we can always begin again.

Most importantly, if we can be successful for the remainder of these 40 days, then there is no reason we cannot be successful going forward. If it is to be a time of sacrifice, so be it! But let's sacrifice in His name those things that have no business being part of us to begin with, and then build up those that bring us closer to Him.

Deacon Bob Connor