

March 9, 2025

First Sunday of Lent

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

As we begin the season of Lent, we are called to carry out the Lenten practices of almsgiving, fasting, and prayer. These disciplines give us the opportunity to embrace the penitential aspect of Lent. The challenge for us is to make sure that these Lenten disciplines are not only done from an outward perspective but also lead us to an interior conversion that prepares us for the Lord's passion, death, and resurrection. When it comes to almsgiving we need to ask if our focus is limited to how much we give to charity or the time we spend on charitable works? Or does almsgiving enable us to see Christ in those who need our help so that we become his hands and feet in the world we live in? When we allow this to happen, we imitate Christ who came to serve and not be served.

When it comes to fasting, do we restrict it to the days the Church calls us to fast and the things we have given up during Lent such as sweets or limiting our screen time? But what about the things we allow to enter our minds and hearts? Do they cause us to become distracted and to be pulled into the currents of our secular society that lead us away from God's truth? Or does the busyness of life cause us to not take time and truly embrace the blessings God has given to us because we are focused on the next thing that needs our attention? Here fasting enables us to prioritize God in our lives and to safeguard our hearts and minds so that we can avoid those things that pull us away from God and his blessings for us.

When it comes to the discipline of prayer, do we not only look for additional times to pray during Lent such as going to the Stations of the Cross or attending daily Mass, but also allow them to deepen and strengthen our relationship with the Lord? Do we realize that prayer is an integral part of our lives that needs to be a priority each day no matter how busy or tired we may be? Do we make sure that our time in prayer is not only limited to words but also listening to God? And do we make sure that the words that we use in our prayer are not only focused on our needs but also give praise and thanksgiving to God no matter how difficult or challenging our lives may be?

As we start our Lenten journey, let us take time to make sure that the disciplines of almsgiving, fasting, and prayer are not only done as an outward obligation, but even more as an interior one, so that Lent becomes a fruitful season that helps us grow deeper in our faith and the profoundness of God's mercy and love.

Deacon Mike Bannio