

February 2021 Pastoral Message

“Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress. Incline your ear to me, answer me speedily in the day when I call.” – Psalm 102:1-2

Grace and peace to you, from God our Father, and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I am so thankful that our Neighbors in Christ Parish has returned to in-person worship over these last weeks. It feels good – great – to be back in our respective sanctuaries, sitting in our familiar spots, talking with family and friends, and worshipping together again. February is the month in our church calendar that ends our time with Epiphany and picks up with the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday begins our journey with the Lord Jesus Christ taking us from his divine earthly ministry, leading us to Holy Week, and then to his cross.

The Lenten 40 days and 40 nights invite us to carry out a discipline of fasting, prayer, works of love to family and neighbor, and remembering our common spiritual birth through holy baptism. The act of repentance is also a core principal in Christian living during the time in Lent. We start with the imposition of ashes on our foreheads, remembering that we are connected back to creation and reflect on our own mortality. Lent has been described as a dark and gloomy season, but I don't believe that to be. I look at Lent as a time of introspection where we recognize who and what we are in the Body of Christ and sometimes yearn for more. During Lent, there is a light at the end of the tunnel; this comes from the empty tomb where our Lord had been resurrected.

Through prayer, singing of hymns, daily devotionals, and reading of scripture, I see Lent as a way of coming closer to God, through a human Jesus Christ. I encourage you to let the Holy Spirit push you towards Christ as he makes his way toward the great city Jerusalem counting down the last days of his life. The psalm verses I chose for this message exemplify what I mean: let us not hide our faces as we pray and praise our loving God. O Lord, hear our prayers and let them come to you.

This year is going to be different though. Our parish will not be worshipping and fellowshiping (yes, that is a verb) with one another on Wednesday nights. For the sake of health reasons, and to not exceed 50% capacity in our congregations at one time, the mid-week Lenten worships have been suspended for this season. As a result of this, I want to let you know that Lent will not disappear, like it did last year during the first months of the “time of Covid.” Instead, I will be recording and preparing Lenten worship on-line, and on various social media platforms. Like the months before us, you will have the availability to watch the Lenten worships at your discretion, so you do not have to miss out on this ever so important time in our church year.

I thank you for all that you have done during this time of Covid, and I look forward to walking with you...again...during this Lenten season. Let us all put on Christ and take this journey together as we follow Jesus to his passion. God bless you all, and may the peace of Christ continue to be with you.

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish