

February 16, 2020

A note from Father Phil

Lent came a little early this year for our Cluster Parishes. The communities gave up Father Fred. And he you. Not an easy penance that. He seems to have been well liked and respected here. He spoke highly of you. Said I would love the people here. I do.

I am impressed with the staffs and volunteers of the three parishes. Like most places it is the secretaries who know the parishes best. I am blessed to be working with Kim Krey, Julie Diendorf and, at least for a short time, Marcia Klein. I appreciate their wealth of experience and their eagerness to help me adjust. Likewise, I am impressed with Deacon Ed with whom I have worked before, and with Todd Kline, our business manager. Recently I witnessed Todd fielding questions at a finance meeting. I thought to myself, "Praise the Lord, I am sitting around a table with some dedicated and concerned people who know how to read financial reports and spread sheets." That is a wonderful thing, because I don't. Eileen Hoogterp and other musicians and cantors together with the sacristans and worship coordinators are great, too. As are lectors, servers and Eucharistic Ministers, ushers, and others involved in the Liturgy. Soon I will meet with the people who work in the school and Religious Education.

Ash Wednesday is just a week and a half away. Thank God. Even if the temperatures hover around freezing and snow is in the forecast, Lent is a hopeful sign that spring is just around the corner.

With Lent come questions like "Do Sundays count when I give up something for Lent?" If this kind of question keeps you up at night, may I strongly suggest that during the holy season you resolve to get a life.

"Do Sundays count when I decide to give up something for Lent?" Honey, that is completely up to you.

The Church asks that together we fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. In addition, we are to abstain from meat on all the Fridays during Lent. Further, the Church encourages healthy people to adopt a fast of their own choosing during this holy time. Since the fast is of one's own creation, one makes up one's own rules. For example, I may decide to give up corned beef and cabbage all during Lent, including Sundays, but not on St. Patrick's Day. Or I might choose to consume only bread and water on Mondays and give the money I save on these simple meals to a favorite charity. Or I might pick one day a week, say a Tuesday, to abstain from using any electronic gadget. In determining your own Lenten practice remember the three disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. And don't arbitrarily change your resolve just because it may become inconvenient.

Happy Lent.