



ST. RAYMOND DE PEÑAFORT

Lent February 14, 2021 Reflections

Dear St. Raymond Parish Family,

This week we mark two important days in our lives as loving and faith-filled people. Today we celebrate Valentine's Day and just three days later, on Wednesday February 17th, we begin the sacred Lenten Season with the observance of Ash Wednesday. Yes, Lent is early this year! It may seem strange to have such contrasting days so close together, but perhaps this offers us an opportunity to link these days together in an effort to deepen our relationships with God and others. As we all know, Valentine's Day has long been designated as a time to show the special people in our lives just how important they are to us. We have this day to let those we love know how much grace, beauty, and happiness they bring into our lives. We may do so with flowers, cards, candy, or a festive meal. In the cold and snow of this winter and as we are still navigating life under the shadow of the coronavirus, we need days such as this to lift our spirits. At the same time, this week we begin the sacred Season of Lent with its hallmarks of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. During these forty days we are invited to reflect deeply on where we need to turn away from those habits or practices that are hurtful to ourselves and others. Admittedly this is difficult. It's hard to really look inside ourselves and be open to seeing where we may have been wrong, where we may have hurt or distanced ourselves from others or made choices that are damaging to our relationships. We have the gift of this Lenten Season to turn back to God and to others with all our hearts. So perhaps it's no accident that Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday fall in the same week. To assist us in our Lenten journey this year I would like to offer the following prayer that comes to us from St. Francis of Assisi. When he was struggling with the realization that he needed to change the direction of his life, he knelt before the cross in the church of San Damiano and prayed:

Most high and glorious God,
bring light to the darkness of my heart.
Give me right faith, certain hope,
and perfect charity.
Lord, give me insight and wisdom
that I may know your holy and true will.

I believe that Francis prayed these words often, especially as he grew in love and appreciation of the Passion of Christ. He came to such a deep love of the Passion that he wanted to surround himself with the cross always and chose to clothe himself and his followers in a habit made in the shape of a cross.

May this Lent 2021 be a time when we too grow in love and appreciation of the Passion of Christ and also deepen our love and appreciation for the important people in our lives. Happy Valentine's Day, and may this be a peaceful, blessed, and grace-filled Lent for all of us.

Sr. Valerie Kulbacki
Director of Care Ministries



ST. RAYMOND DE PEÑAFORT

Lent

February 21, 2021

Reflections

WELCOME TO LENT!

It is often said that Lent is a PENITENTIAL season.

This does not mean it is PENAL (from Latin poena = punishment), but rather a time of REPENTANCE (from Latin pentire = to regret).

Lent is a time to face the things we regret doing or not doing and to set out in a new direction. Lent is a time to make sure we are claiming our true identity as Christians. Lent is a time to make sure that we are living as fully as we can in the power of Christ. Lent is a time of realigning priorities in (the) light of the gospel.

Colossians 2:9 - 3:11

You have been given fullness in Christ, who is head over every power and authority...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead...Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules? Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! These are all destined to perish with use because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, with their false humility and harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual desire...Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God...So do not lie to one another, since **you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.**

LENT IS A TIME TO ASK OURSELVES AND REFLECT ON SERIOUS QUESTIONS:

1. Is my identity centered in God's love for me as a unique person or in what other people think of me?
2. Am I moving beyond the old self formed and limited by my past experiences and relationships? How are fear and anger holding me back from growing in my relationships with God and others?
3. How can I make space for God in my life?
4. What can I put in place of the practices that control me or that have failed to give me joy or peace (checking my phone /watching television/going shopping)?
5. How can I make space in my life for giving to others?
6. What is one positive thing that I want to do to realign my priorities?

LENTEN SCRIPTURE STUDY

To help us learn more about our history and identity as People of God, Fr. Scott will be offering a series of Lenten reflections on the covenants. The covenants give form and structure to the Bible and to all the Sunday reading for Lent and the Easter Vigil. The reflection series will begin on Sunday, February 21, 2021 and continue for the next 6 weeks. The podcast can be found on the website (<https://st-raymond.org>). You are invited to carve out some time to listen and learn more about who we are as Church.



ST. RAYMOND DE PEÑAFORT

Lent

February 28, 2021

Reflections

Dear Friends of St Raymond,

Receiving bad news is hard to hear. We have trouble listening to what is being said. We have difficulty comprehending the full message. It is for this reason that it is good advice to have an advocate be present when receiving a major diagnosis from the doctor, a third party who is able to take in the complete message on our behalf.

But what if, today, we were given a glimpse of what our lives will look like once this dreaded pandemic is over? Would such an experience have an impact of how we live now? Imagine if we could see that we will be fortunate to be counted among the survivors, and hopefully not carrying with us long-haul symptoms, mental-health problems, or the effects of months in isolation. Would we take that long-awaited sigh of relief knowing that, for us, life will go on? Would we now perhaps begin to take some risks? Would we now avoid the vaccine, or leave the face covering behind, since we already experienced that glimpse?

Three from the inner circle of the Apostles are privileged to accompany Jesus to the mountaintop where they, Peter, James, and John, experience a glimpse of the resurrection, when suddenly, Jesus is transfigured in front of their eyes and his clothes became dazzling white. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus.

Now, given the gift of fast-forwarding to the resurrection, it is no wonder that Peter wanted to cling to this special moment, especially when we remember that he and the other apostles were so conflicted when Jesus told them that they must continue the journey to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Peter is focused only on the destination, he is avoiding the journey to Jerusalem, the journey to the cross and he is avoiding the mission. And just as Peter tries to hold tight to this moment, the cloud descends. Being in the cloud disorients. The gray mist casts a mystical shadow over the entire land. Our sense of sound becomes critical as our range of vision diminishes. Our movements slows because we cannot see very far in front of us and have no idea what might emerge around us. In the dark, with the ability to navigate removed, all we can do, like Peter, James, and John, is listen.

Then from the cloud comes a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Listen, says the voice. Listen: when Jesus tells those who are hurting, "Blessed are you...", then challenges those of us who are not poor or hungry or grieving, to know that they, are rooted and planted in the love of God. Listen: when Jesus calls us to love—even our enemies. Listen: when Jesus tells us to pick up our cross and follow him and to not hold tight to our lives, but to lose our lives, by giving them away to others in love and in service.

This Lent, we too, have been given a glimpse of the glory of the resurrection that lies ahead for us. But first, we must listen to Jesus as we pick up our cross and follow him to Jerusalem. On this journey, may we continue the mission as we leave behind a path filled with compassion and kindness to all who are hurting.

God bless,
Deacon John Lorbach