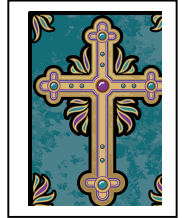


Peace is...Cultivating our Faith



1 Corinthians 10:12 **“Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.”**

Luke 13:9 **“ ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future.’ ”**

Reflection:

Examination

Do you still have the same mentality about "giving something up" for Lent that you did in grade school? Have you 'graduated' to giving up meat, alcohol, or your morning coffee? Do you consider it a burden?... Are you ready to use fasting instead as a small offering to God in appreciation for all that He has done for you? As an act of love?

Think about what Christ gave up for you - a life of luxury; a roof over his head; ruling an earthly kingdom; political power; money; ordinary comforts; eating and drinking for 40 days and nights; and, of course, his very body and blood to a brutal and agonizing death.

If we fast well, focusing on the Lord, we can benefit in many ways. For one, fasting helps us to be mindful of those millions who do not have enough to eat on a daily basis through no fault of their own. It leads us not only to have compassion for others who do not have their basic needs met, but also to look at our own lives and the choices we are making. Prayerfully considering the corporal works of mercy, we can see where we are lacking in taking care of the needs of God's people. Through prayer, we can discern God's will in "giving something back" this Lent. (see reverse side of flyer)

Cultivation

The gospel story reminds us that God has given us another day, another Lent, to cultivate our relationship with Him. We may not have tomorrow. What can we do to cultivate a more generous heart and a more forgiving spirit? How are we fostering our own spiritual growth? What kind of "fertilizer" do we need to "spruce up" our prayer life?

Relationships are based on communication and trust. How well are we listening to and responding to God's initiatives in our lives? In the first reading today, Moses had no idea what God had planned for him when he stopped in curiosity to look at the burning bush. God draws us in many, even mysterious, ways. He provides us an abundance of opportunities to reconcile with Him and others, to love and serve Him and others. Do we choose to look for these opportunities provided for us? Or do we close our eyes in fear of what challenges they might impose upon us?

As we respond to God's invitation, we grow. We become more alive, more fully who God created us to be. And He gives us His peace, which is beyond all understanding.

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**Action:**

- Participate in the Cluster Communal Penance Service at St. John Church on Monday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m.*
- Deepen your prayer life by spending 15 minutes each day quietly reflecting on how God is inviting you to a closer relationship with Him.*
- Take a step in "giving something up" that gets in the way of your relationship with God.*
- Do something each day as an act of love for God.*
- Commit to providing for others who are less fortunate, to "giving something back." Think of something you can do each month, even after Lent is over.*

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Background

“The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, p.588)

Examination of Conscience in light of the Corporal Works of Mercy ~ Matthew 25: 31-46

The 1st Work of Mercy

Jesus: “I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you me drink.”

Reflection: Have I done enough to alleviate the suffering of the people of Haiti?
Have I failed to speak about Christ to those who hunger for His presence?
Do I conserve water and food, or do I waste these precious gifts?

The 2nd Work of Mercy

Jesus: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Reflection: Do I have a genuine love for my neighbor? co-worker? people of other races?
Am I accepting of immigrants? their different mannerisms, language, color?
Have I tried to put others at ease, or do I act in superior, prideful ways?

The 3rd Work of Mercy

Jesus: “I was naked and you clothed me.”

Reflection: Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate?
Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune, and poverty?
Have I “covered” those who were stripped of their dignity by others’ words?

The 4th Work of Mercy

Jesus: “I was ill and you comforted me.”

Reflection: Have I taken time to visit a loved one who is in the hospital or care center?
Do I have a caring attitude when I take of a family member who is sick?
How do I treat those who are emotionally or spiritually sick or pained by grief?

The 5th Work of Mercy

Jesus: “I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Reflection: How do I minister to those who are imprisoned by addiction?
Have I fought politically to provide for those who are imprisoned by poverty?

Have I fought against our nation's law that enforces the death penalty?