



From the desk of Father Rich Yanos

Today we celebrate the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

In today's Gospel, Jesus cures a leper. As he does so we gain an insight into his mission, a mission he gives to us. Leprosy is a terrible physical affliction. It is painful and it disfigures the body. But unlike other illnesses, it is a disease that isolates the leper for he must live away and apart from the community. We know from our recent experience of the pandemic how loneliness and isolation can bring great suffering.

Notice that Jesus heals not only the skin disease, but the whole man, body, soul, and spirit so that the leper can rejoin the family and the community, including worshipping community, as he is told to show himself to the priest. Jesus heals in a way that restores the leper's humanity, for the leper is once again someone who belongs to others, as he talks, worships, works, and eats with all in the community. Belonging is what it means to be fully human.

Jesus asks us to do the same on his behalf, to heal in a way that restores the humanity of others by making room at the table of life for all. Each year we take up this mission with fresh energy through the Annual Catholic Appeal. This is Commitment Weekend for the Appeal and in light of the Gospel we have chosen the theme *Together at the table*. We take up this mission together but also to make sure that everyone is included. We are true to Christ's mission when we reach out to those in need with his healing power, restoring their humanity and doing all we can to let them know that they belong.

Through the Appeal, we as one body reach out to struggling parish communities, schools, religious education and ministry formation programs, and respect life and peace initiatives in the Archdiocese. Through Catholic Relief Services, we also reach out to people beyond our local Church who are suffering from illnesses, natural disasters, and the calamities of war.

Together at the table—that is our vision, our mission, and our purpose. As your financial circumstances permit, please join me and other Catholics and make a gift to the Annual Appeal. Once our parish meets its goal, proceeds will return to our parish to support its mission in our local community.

Belonging means coming together at the table of life in all its forms, but especially at the Eucharistic table, the altar of the Lord's sacrifice. It is at this table that we are renewed and become fully human, for it is here that we experience what it means to belong to each other and to belong to Christ. As you celebrate the Eucharist today and find healing in experiencing what it means to be fully human, as someone who belongs to others and to Christ, I pray that you will join with me in taking up the healing mission of Jesus so that all will find a place at the table of life.

LENTEN GUIDELINES

It's hard to believe that in just a few days we will begin the season of Lent. The following are the main guidelines we as Catholics follow as we enter this holy season.

Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years old and older on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent.

Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. Those bound by

this may only take one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted, if necessary, to maintain strength according to one's needs, but eating solid food between meals is not permitted.

The special Paschal fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged for Holy Saturday.

By the threefold discipline of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer the Church keeps Lent from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday. All the faithful and catechumens should undertake the serious practice of these three traditions. Failure to observe individual days of penance is not considered serious, but failure to observe any penitential days at all or a substantial number of such days must be considered serious.

Stations of the Cross will be offered each Friday throughout Lent at 7:00 p.m. in St. Eugene Church. All in our parish are invited to join us in church for a special evening Mass as we honor St. Joseph on Monday, March 18th at 7:00 p.m.

This coming Wednesday, February 14th, is not only, Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, but it is also Valentine's Day. According to legend, the Valentine takes its name from a young Christian priest who lived in Rome. Like so many of the early Christians, Valentine had been imprisoned because of his faith. Often and longingly, he thought of his loved ones and wanted to assure them of his well-being and of his love for them.

Beyond his cell window, just within reach, grew a cluster of violets. He picked some of the heart-shaped leaves and pricked them with the words, "Remember your Valentine," and sent them off by a friendly dove. On the next day, and the next, he sent more messages that simply said, "I love you." Thus, did the Valentine have its beginning. And so, it has been through the ages...Those who love, remember...and send Valentines to express their love.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY and a HAPPY LENT to all in our parish family!

Many parishioners regularly share with me how much they enjoy and appreciate the "Little Books" of Advent, Lent, and Easter. These books have made such a positive impact here in our parish that we have once again purchased the "Little Black Books" for your personal spiritual and prayer life during the upcoming Lenten season. In the gathering space and at all the exit doors of the church this weekend you can pick up a copy to carry with you in your purse, car, pocket, etc. We ask that you take one per family. This will allow for as many as possible to receive them. You can use these informative books to spend just six minutes a day in personal meditation/reflection and as your traveling companion for the season of Lent and Holy Week. Enjoy them!

With the start of the Lenten season this coming Wednesday, we are fortunate this year to have the return of our, Knights of Columbus sponsored, Friday night Fish-Frys.

I just wanted to put a little plug in for our Knights of Columbus who have worked so hard to pull this Fish-Fry together. For this reason, I ask all in our parish to affirm their efforts by coming out and ordering their usual options of pizza, pasta, shrimp and, of course, their delicious fried fish options to enjoy with family and/or friends.

All the information you need can be found in today's bulletin. The fish-fry's will be held every Friday in Lent except for February 23rd, March 8th, and March 22nd, due to the need to set up the gym for the following day's St. Joseph Table. Please support the efforts of our Knights who do so much for so many. Thanks.

Finally, our sincere congratulations and best wishes to Fr. Ed Pacocha who will be celebrating his birthday this coming Friday, February 16th. Best wishes to you and may God bless you with many more years!

Fr. Rich Yanos