

## Message from Father Tom

You're out with your friends on a Friday night and suddenly you notice that one of them has switched from his favorite microbrew to ... lemonade?

Giving up something for Lent sometimes evokes head-scratching in non-Catholics, but what might seem like just another Catholic thing can actually be a practice with deep spiritual significance. Right now, many Christians around the world will reflect on what to give up for Lent in 2023. Lent is a 40-day period of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that begins on February 22 (Ash Wednesday) and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday (April 6).

There are not as many required penances during Lent. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting (from age 18 to 59) and abstinence (for anyone over 14). Fasting means that only one main meal and two smaller meals may be eaten. Abstinence means that no meat or meat products may be eaten on these days or on any Friday of Lent.

In preparation for celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter, those in the faith choose to give up or start doing certain things— whether it's a luxurious good they don't really need, a habit they are hoping to break or a practice they want to implement to strengthen their relationship with God. We focus on turning our hearts and minds back toward God. Don't be afraid to shoot for the stars, you may hit the moon. St Paul in his letter to the Philippians, gives some food for thought: "Fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honor, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise" — Philippians 4:8. Those are high ideals, but not impossible ones. How can we aim so high and still live in this nitty-gritty world? Perfection may not be possible, but aiming for it isn't a bad idea. Someone asked the king of swing, Benny Goodman, why he kept practicing on his clarinet continually. He replied, "So that, even when I'm bad, I'm good." When we set our sights high, even if we fall short, we may be well above average.

Here are a few suggestions to help you in your Lenten resolutions:

- † Give up bitterness; turn to forgiveness
- † Give up hatred; return good for evil.
- † Give up negativism; be positive. Give up complaining; be grateful.
- † Give up pessimism; be an optimist.
- † Give up harsh judgements; think kind thoughts.
- † Give up worry; trust Divine Providence.
- † Give up discouragement; be full of hope.
- † Give up anger; be more patient.
- † Give up pettiness; be more mature.
- † Give up jealousy; pray for trust.
- † Give up gossiping; control your thoughts.
- † Give up gloom; enjoy the beauty around you

The Church has always encouraged the faithful to do something to enter into the spirit of Lent more deeply. This concept of doing a good deed is often incorporated into Lenten observances, so that the observer is not just giving up a vice, but also starting a virtue trying to incorporate something positive in their life, such as being more grateful every day.

God's Eucharistic blessings,

Fr. Tom Smithson, SSS

Pastor