



Bishop James
Checchio

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On February 14, we enter the holy season of Lent while we also celebrate Valentine's Day throughout our country. I remember as a child exchanging Valentine Day cards with all the girls in our class, while we boys received them from all the girls. Later, of course, it was an important day to have a date to go to the movies, dinner, roller skating or such. Today, husbands and wives and those in love still exchange cards or gifts, particularly flowers and chocolates, and often dinner out.

Ash Wednesday is not a time for happy celebrations. Chocolates and flowers do not fit in well with the somber mood of the day. So how are we to celebrate Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day this year on the same day? It would be good to postpone dinner and save those chocolates for another day or give them on Mardi Gras the day before. But, we should all keep in mind that both days give us an opportunity to express our love. Valentine's Day is always associated with love. Ash Wednesday and Lent are a time that calls us to love of God and others, as we turn to the Lord anew with all our hearts, minds and strength.

At the St. John Neumann Pastoral Center, I am so pleased that we will begin a new adventure in love February 14. On that day, we will begin offering daily Eucharistic Adoration in our chapel. Last year, we began daily Mass, and now we will extend the blessings the Lord offers us in the Eucharist through Adoration. The work of the pastoral center is to promote evangelization, which has to be rooted in prayer!

At each Mass, we climb Calvary anew to enter into the Lord's sacrifice for us. It was His greatest moment of love, a love that lasts until our day, and will endure forever. It is a great mystery for us to enter in to, and it is the love which feeds and sustains us in the other loves of our lives, even those of Valentine's Day.

At baptism, we each took on three lifelong disciplines, that of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These disciplines help us to return to or stay committed to our baptismal promises. Regularly communicating intensely with our Beloved, exercising self-control so as to emphasize the supreme importance of the spiritual over the material in our lives, and finally generously sharing with those in need. These disciplines are the marks of our Lent. Just as we are marked by ashes on Ash Wednesday, which call us to penance, a reminder of our sinfulness and the power of God to create holy people out of sinners, so these three disciplines should also be marked more clearly within us today.

As part of your efforts to spend more time in prayer this Lent, I encourage you to consider coming to the Pastoral Center for Eucharistic Adoration and Mass. On Ash Wednesday, I will celebrate Mass in the chapel at 9 a.m. Immediately afterwards, our Eucharistic Adoration will begin, ending at 11:45 a.m. On all other days the Pastoral Center is open, Adoration will be held in the chapel from 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. followed by Mass.

For our almsgiving and fasting, perhaps consider participating in our Rice Bowl initiative, which combats hunger locally and around the globe (www.crsricebowl.org). Thanks to your efforts, our diocese has been a leader in our country with this worthy effort. Our Bishop's Annual Appeal, which takes place during Lent, is another way to help those in need and support so many good pastoral initiatives and charitable efforts in our diocese. Your parish will be sharing information on our appeal with you and you can also learn more about it on our website: www.diometuchen.org. Whatever you choose to do for Lent will no doubt help to unite us in loving God and neighbor more fully.

Indeed, may this Lent be a time of turning anew to the Lord for you, may it be a time of deepening your love. Know of my prayers and love for you, and I count on your prayers too, especially during this holy season of Lent. God bless you!

+ James F. Checchio

The Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA
Bishop of Metuchen

Lenten Obligations

So that the Church of Metuchen may be spiritually one in a common observance of Lent, the following days of fast and abstinence are to be observed by all Catholics of the Diocese who enjoy the blessings of good health:

1. The days of fast and abstinence are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
2. All other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence.
3. From the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday until the celebration of the Easter Vigil on the evening of Holy Saturday, the Easter fast should be observed so that, with uplifted and welcoming hearts, we may be ready to celebrate the joys of the Resurrection. This ancient tradition, intimately connected with the *Rites of Holy Week* and the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, is encouraged, especially in those places baptizing catechumens at the Easter Vigil.

The obligation to fast applies only to Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59. To fast in the Catholic tradition means to limit oneself to one full meal during the day so as to experience hunger. The obligation of abstinence affects all Catholics who have reached the age of 14. Abstinence in the Catholic tradition means to abstain from meat. The obligation of fast and abstinence, as a whole, is a serious obligation. While failure to observe any penitential day in itself may not be considered serious, the failure to observe any penitential days at all, or a substantial number of them without good cause, would be considered a grave matter. Those unable to abstain for a valid reason on any given Friday of Lent are asked to perform some other penitential act, or to abstain on another day.



February 14

Distribution of ashes:

9 AM Mass
12 PM Liturgy of the Word
4:30 PM Liturgy of the Word
7:30 PM Mass

Be reconciled to God

Confessions are heard every Saturday from 4-4:30 PM
Special times for confession will held during 24 hours for the Lord on March 9 and March 10.

The Parish Penance Service is scheduled for March 20 at 7:30 PM with visiting priests available for confessions.



All are welcome to Fridays of Lent events at St. Jude Church:

Friday Soup Suppers: 6:30 to 7:30 PM
Way of the Cross at 9:45 AM and 7:30 PM

Easter Duty or Easter Precept

nday, (May 27, 2018). Those conscious of serious sin are obligated to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) before receiving Holy Communion.



Join our faith community—and nearly 14,000 Catholic communities across the United States—in a life-changing Lenten journey of encounter with CRS Rice Bowl. Pick up your family's CRS Rice Bowl in Church vestibule. Add to the rice bowl box your offerings during Lent. Return at the end of Lent. During the 40 days of Lent, as companions on the journey, we will encounter our neighbor.



Eucharistic Adoration

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed for Adoration in the Chapel on Wednesdays from 9:45 AM to 11 PM and Thursdays from 5 AM to 9:00 AM

Due to the Liturgies of Ash Wednesday the Eucharist will not be exposed for Adoration on that day.

24 Hours for the Lord Adoration will be held on March 9, 3 PM to March 10, 4:45 PM with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

We encourage people to stop by for some quiet time of reflection and prayer. Spend 5 minutes or an hour in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord.