

**February 27, 2022**

Dear Friends,

This week we begin the season of Lent. March 2<sup>nd</sup> is Ash Wednesday. The schedule will be sent to you via FlockNotes. There will be three Masses on Ash Wednesday 6:30; 8:15 and 7:30PM. Ashes will be distributed during each of these Masses. It may be that our pandemic is finally winding down. Many have been infected. Many have died. There has been so much controversy, so much contention, so much disagreement, so much confusion, so much contradicting evidence, so many disparate voices. The feeling in my own heart is that we have all been enduring Lent for the last two years. If ever we as a people, a nation, a world, we were in need of what Easter brings, this year would qualify at being at the top of the list.

How will you prepare yourself this Lent? On the front of the Paduan there is a reflection on Words—their power for good or ill and their impact on our lives. Can I propose a fasting from criticism this Lent? Not just from harsh words or angry words but especially from words that bite or sting or demean or wound? Each year we focus on food and fasting from food as if that is the biggest need in our lives at the present time. “Well, I don’t think so, Ned.” Overeating is an issue, don’t get me wrong. But there is so much more damage done especially to ourselves personally and to our relationships by the carping word, the snarky comment, the sarcastic tone, the rolling of the eyes, the slight smirk on the face. Is the real problem too much snacking? We eat too much because the words addressed to us so often tear us down and the food serves to comfort.

Why not do a very different Lent this year after two years of quarantine, distancing and sacrifice? Why not choose to embrace a truly Easter way of speaking. Jesus lives! He is risen! There is reason to rejoice. Yes. There is. And our words should reflect this rather than be downers so often. As a corollary to that kind of Lent, how about a more generous Lent. The pandemic has hit many hard in the pocketbook. But not everyone. Actually some have done very well during these past two years—for a variety of reasons. How about looking around for the needy and being generous with them. Giving alms never goes out of style. This weekend we kickoff the Annual Catholic Charities Appeal. That is a truly worthwhile cause for you to support. Last year you, the parishioners here gave over \$60,000 just to the Catholic Charities Appeal. That is our goal for this year. The Archbishop asks us to be generous.

The Catholic Charities Appeal helps literally thousands of people—with handicaps, addiction issues, single moms, widows and homeless people, those with mental difficulties and genetic disorders, and the poor who need food and clothing. Liz Hagedorn, one of our longtime parishioners and the Executive Director of Nutritional Development Services for the Archdiocese will speak at all the Masses this weekend. She will describe for you what her programs are able to accomplish and the great number of people who are helped by your contributions without your ever knowing who they are or how much you helped. But the Lord knows. The Lord remembers. It is the Lord himself who said, “Whatever you do the least of these, you do unto me.” Let us do unto the Lord this Lent—generously. And watch what you say. Do that and you’ll have your best Lent ever.

Peace

Msgr. McHenry