

St. Valentine Parish

(A Preparation Guide For Lent 2018)

The forty days of Lent can seem like a long time, especially if one is giving up a favorite food or activity. It's helpful to have someone to keep us going (spouse, children, siblings, cousin, or friend). Our partners can encourage us, challenge us, and pick us up if we falter.

This year, consider approaching Lent as a team. That doesn't mean giving up or doing the same things as your partner for Lent, although that's a possibility. It does mean sharing your Lenten resolution(s) and asking for each other's prayers and active support. People often find they're much more likely to keep their Lenten resolutions when they hold themselves accountable to another person. Knowing someone walks with us, even if it's not exactly the same path, can be a great comfort and motivator.

As you think about Lenten resolutions this year, consider following the traditional practices of **"Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving"**, which by the way is our parish theme for this Lenten season. We encourage you to also consider focusing on items of "self discipline" as a compliment to "giving up" something. Following are a few ideas to get you started.

Prayer is the foundation of Christian life; and Lent is an excellent time to evaluate our prayer life and, if necessary, make improvements. Have I been faithful to prayer each day? Have I used Scripture, spiritual books and other resources to deepen my prayer? Do I try to listen as well as speak? Here are a few suggestions:

- Set aside a time for prayer each day and invite your partner to do the same. It can be the same time, or different times depending on your schedules. If you're parents, take turns looking after the kids so that each of you can have quiet time.
- During Lent, arrive at the weekend Masses you attend a few minutes early; and use the time before Mass for quiet, reflective prayer. To help people find some quiet time during Lent, our parish will keep the inner doors of the church closed before the start of all weekend Masses; and ask parishioners to abstain from talking and visiting in the main section of the church.
- Consider participating in one or more of the Lenten Prayer opportunities St. Vals will be offering. This includes: *Friday Stations of the Cross at 7pm in the Church; and Sunday Evening Prayer in our School Chapel at 5pm.*
- Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as frequently as you can. At a minimum, plan on participating in the joint, reconciliation service for both OLL and St. Vals. *It takes place at Our Lady of Loretto on February 27, starting at 7pm.*
- Dip into a spiritual classic, for example, *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales, or the autobiographies of St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Teresa of Avila. At a minimum, pick up one of the Lenten booklets our parish offers; and use it daily.

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Fasting can take numerous forms. Giving up a favorite food or drink is a tangible reminder of our commitment to draw closer to Christ. Or, we can fast from a non-productive behavior or attitude. Some ideas to consider:

- Give up a video game, a TV program, or a social networking site. Use the time to do some spiritual reading, visit an elderly relative, or help your children learn a new skill.
- Participate in the weekly soup suppers offered at the Redford parishes during Lent, or serve a simple supper in your home once or twice each week. The schedule for the weekly, Redford parish soup suppers is:
 - Feb 21 (Our Lady Of Loretto);
 - Feb 28 (St Robert Bellarmine);
 - Mar 7 (St John Bosco);
 - Mar 14 (St Valentine).
- Fast from negative comments, put-downs, and sarcastic remarks to everyone you interact with; and apologize if you slip up. Or perhaps fast from being judgmental with people you meet - family members; coworkers; store clerks; fellow parishioners; etc.

Almsgiving is sponsored by many parishes during Lent. Consider making a commitment that will last beyond the Lenten season. Here are some suggestions:

- Take out your household budget and review your charitable contributions. Can you increase them or change the allocations to the various charitable organizations?
- Do you volunteer in your parish or community? If so, discuss how you can support each other. If you're not already a volunteer, prayerfully discern whether you are called to some kind of service; and consider supporting St. Vals ongoing need for help in all parish commissions; councils and ministries, or participating in the monthly trip to serve at the Manna Community Soup Kitchen.
- Simplify your life. Clean out a drawer, closet, or other storage area each day during Lent and give unneeded but usable clothes and household items to charitable organizations, like our parish St. Vincent DePaul Society, or save the items and donate them to one of our parish's rummage sales, held twice a year.

- *St. Valentine's Worship Commission*