

From the Pastor's Desk..... 7 February 2016

After this weekend we make a departure from Ordinary Time and enter the season of Lent. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday with its stark dramatic ritual of signing the forehead with ashes. There is something in this ritual that speaks to us deeply: the acknowledgment of our human fragility and mortality and our need for reconciliation and conversion. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of a journey: a metaphorical journey through the wastelands and ash heaps of our lives; a journey through deserts where our hunger and thirst for God is awakened; a journey through the wilderness of lurking dangers and luring temptations. All of this needs to be traversed if we are to reach the Promised Land – where unimaginable dreams are realised. The hard and necessary task of our Lenten journey is rewarded by the joy of Easter.

Throughout these 40 days we are schooled in Christian virtue through the disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. In this, both the personal and social dimensions of Christian living are brought to the fore: “During Lent penance should be not only inward and individual, but also outward and social” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, # 110). To this end Project Compassion – a work of the Catholic aid organisation, Caritas International – offers an effective way of showing our solidarity with those burdened by poverty and injustice.

Finally, Lent is a time to prepare for baptism: “In the liturgy and liturgical catechesis of Lent the reminder of baptism already received or the preparation for its reception, as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the paschal mystery, in which each of the elect will share through the sacraments of initiation” (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA]*, #125).

**Peace and blessings,
*Gerard***