

After the Heart of Jesus ...

*“Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”*



These words of encouragement in today's Gospel conclude the Beatitudes, the centerpiece of Jesus' teaching about life in God's kingdom. The beatitudes remind us that holiness is found in everyday actions of showing mercy, hungering for justice, working for peace, being with those who grieve, and living humbly. They do not present a highly complex and complicated strategy in order to be blessed by God, but rather give a way that is accessible to everyone.

Sometimes Catholics are challenged about the role of good works in salvation by those who believe differently than us. They mistakenly think that we teach that we can earn our way into heaven by good works. We know that salvation is through faith and is all grace, a free gift of God. So if it is faith that allows us the experience of heaven, what difference do good works make? From both Jesus' parable of the Last Judgment and the Letter of James, we know that works of mercy and charity are also necessary. Also, reading the beatitudes leads us to see that our experience of Heaven is impacted by our way of life here, for some people's reward will be great in heaven, which supposes that some people's reward will be lesser in heaven. When it comes to heaven, we take Jesus' word on it. Eternal life is given to those who profess belief in Him and who eat His Body and drink His Blood. Yet our experience of the glory and joy of heaven is impacted by virtuous and holy living. Any joy or hope or love we share with another here on earth, or any other beatitude way of life, is magnified for us in the great reward of heaven. Faith and actions are both important to us.



Believe it or not, Ash Wednesday is this week, and we will once again begin the holy Lenten journey to Easter. Lent provides the annual community retreat for all of us to turn away from sin and to be more faithful to the Gospel. This journey is taken both as individuals and as a community of faith. Please take some time the next few days before Lent begins to review the Lenten regulations for all Catholics and to prepare to fully enter Lent with a heart intent on conversion. Masses on Ash Wednesday are at 6:30 AM, 8:15 AM, 10:00 AM (School) and 7:00 PM. Ashes will also be distributed during prayer services at 12:00 Noon and 5:30 PM.

There are many additional prayer and formation experiences to help us all draw closer to Christ this Lenten season. Lenten daily meditation booklets will be available beginning Wednesday for personal reflection. If you have not been a part of a small faith sharing group, this may be the right time to give the small group experience a try. This year groups will have an option of using a couple of different resources for their small groups. Stations of the Cross with Benediction will be offered twice each Friday of Lent, in the afternoons with the school children and again at 7:00 PM for the entire parish. We have prepared a special Scriptural Way of the Cross of St. Walter Church booklet that uses the set of stations we have in our church. A shorter version of this Way of the Cross will also be printed in next week's bulletin. The Sacrament of Penance (Confession) is available on Tuesday evenings at 5:30 PM as well as on Saturday afternoons at 4:00 PM. I again want to encourage the participation of all in the Parish Mission from Sunday, February 17 to Wednesday, February 20. May all of us use wisely these opportunities to find healing through our life with Christ.

You may have noticed that we have changed our envelope service to a different company. We now use Our Sunday Visitor as our envelope company. They print, compile, and mail the envelopes every month. We are saving some money by going with this company in basic costs of the envelopes. But we are also saving because the monthly insert "Grace in Action" is now included with the monthly envelopes to all parishioners and not inserted into Sunday bulletins. Finally, Our Sunday Visitor offers us an envelope mailing option to encourage stewardship with children. They will start receiving them quarterly beginning in April. If you would like your child to receive envelopes please contact the parish house.

As we prepare to begin the Lenten season, may we pray for each other to more faithfully follow ...

After the Heart of Jesus!

Father John