

## After the Heart of Jesus ...

*“For if, by the transgression of the one,  
death came to reign through that one,  
how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace  
and of the gift of justification  
come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.”  
Romans 5:17*



I don't normally select the more theological statements from the readings to begin this weekly column, but the reading from Paul's letter provides a great transition from the Old Testament account of the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the Gospel account of the temptations Jesus faced in the desert. Lent begins with these stories of disobedience and obedience, of destruction and restoration, of death and life. Paul reminds us that our actions have consequences. Acts of disobedience bring destruction and death to one's soul. Obedience brings restoration and life to one's being.

At the beginning of Lent we are called to "Repent, and believe the Good News" or to "Turn away from sin, and be faithful to the Gospel." How we approach these beginning days of this Holy Season is often impacted by which part of those instructions we focus on. Do we tend to focus more on the repenting and turning away from sin, or do we tend to focus more on this being a time to believe more and to live the Gospels more faithfully?

Lent has both a personal and communal nature. Part of this journey we make alone, because there are some things, like accepting salvation, we need to do ourselves. Yet much of Lent is about what we do as a community to refocus ourselves on Godly ways and what it means for us as a people to be saved and justified. Within the parish we want to foster both the personal and communal nature of this Lenten Season. And hopefully we have planned well for these forty days.

All are invited to take a Lenten "coin" for their keychain or pocket that has a crown of thorns with the word "Lent" on one side and the passage from Isaiah 53:5 on the other. The prophet's words will serve as the theme for Lent 2008 here at St. Walter Parish: *By His Wounds we are Healed*. Throughout Lent there will be a table in the narthex that will provide resources at the beginning of Lent and will be a place to learn more about our Lenten almsgiving for the rest of Lent. For our personal journeys we are providing an array of individual and family resource, including daily reflection books and devotions.

Besides our Sunday celebrations of Mass, the major communal Lenten activity will be our Lenten Mission from Sunday, February 17, to Wednesday, February 20. The Mission will be a wonderful opportunity to receive the abundance of God's grace in His healing love. Monday night includes witnessing from three parishioners. Our high school teens will share a drama about reconciliation on Tuesday night. Father Mario will draw the Mission to close with a special healing Mass on Wednesday. Please invite family and friends to join us for a very special Mission.

Our sacrificial offerings / almsgiving projects have also been selected with the theme of healing in mind. We'll share more as Lent goes by about how we will provide the gift of healing to many people in our own area to the poor in Guntur, India (the home of Father Charles Joseph, who served the past few years here at St. Walter) to the disadvantaged and orphans in Sucre, Bolivia (our sister diocese). To encourage giving, special First Aid Kits are available to take home and place in a prominent place to collect money in and remind all family members to make small sacrifices throughout Lent to help bring healing to someone in need.

Stations of the Cross with Benediction are offered twice each Friday of Lent, at 9:00 AM with the school children (when school is in session) and again at 7:00 PM for the entire parish. We use a special Scriptural Way of the Cross of St. Walter Church booklet that uses the set of stations we have in our church. Since the Traditional Stations of the Cross include events that are not in the Bible, Pope John Paul II encouraged the praying of the Scriptural Way of the Cross as a means of praying ecumenically with non-Catholic Christians about Jesus' last steps

May we be prepared to receive an abundance of grace during this Lenten journey as we live ...

After the Heart of Jesus,  
*Father John*