

From the Pastor

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, February 22 and culminates on Easter Sunday, April 8. There are many traditions that are practiced in mainline denominations. A general statement that may fit for all is that it is a time of simplicity and preparation.

Lent can be a time of personal growth in our own "life-time journey of faith and spiritual growth". One can be as focused and structured on one's faith as desired.

There are themes that we observe during this 40-day period.

- Penitence - the quality or state of being penitent sorrow for sins or faults.
- Baptismal renewal - Our Lenten Confessions should prepare us to reject Satan, all his works, and all his empty promises and to make a deep act of faith in the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- Prayer, fasting, and service - Prayer and fasting is defined as voluntarily going without food in order to focus on prayer and fellowship with God. Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing what you desire. Rather, it is simply forcing yourself to focus and rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom you need.
- Confession of sin - This is rooted in the promise of God that comes through the cross of Christ.

Now, after sharing these words of information on the meaning and theme of Lent, I want to share some words that I found in a Lenten booklet that I found recently, *Book of Faith - Lenten Journey - Marks of the Christian*, by David L. Miller.

The following is an excerpt from the Ash Wednesday devotional:

"Your love burned for me and in me, Holy Mystery. And I yearned for more, to touch the flame of the love whose source is beyond human imagining.

Through the restless burning of my soul, you moved me beyond my fears to throw myself into the arms of the hope you ignited in me. Loving Mystery, you were - and are - that hope that burns in us, moving us to reach beyond the fears that hold us back from more deeply knowing and serving you."

Theological Thoughts

"Each person meets God in his or her own experience, whether that experience occurs with a community at a liturgical or paraliturgical service, or with one or two others, or alone."

Questions to Ponder

- **What memories of blessings did today's reflection call to mind for you?**
- **When you have been helpless and hopeless, how has God broken through to bring you to a new day?**
- **Where or in whom do you experience the "mercies of God"?**

This is meant to be a 'tickler' for what I would like to use for our mid-week Lenten journey. May we continue to be a blessing to others as they are also blessings to us.

Blessings,

Pastor Merlyn

