



Message from Fr. Leandro "Lines" Dela Cruz

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

What might be more difficult for all of us right here at the beginning of Lent 2021 is the comparison and contrast we can make of keeping our baptismal covenant promises since Lent 2020 until now. Back then the arrival of a certain pandemic came upon the scene. We have presumably since learned a lot about ourselves and how we have handled all the shutdowns and restrictions. Through it all, have we been true Christians with all around us? I believe that with our answer to that one, we could “have our hands full.”

There is lots of room in the process to list those nasty little sins we have committed against others, like impatience, rash judgment, and mean words. This not to omit the bad choices we may have made in seeking comfort from our pain with bad and wrongful thoughts and actions along with over-indulgence in food and drink. Above all, and more important, is our Lenten resolve this year and what changes we will implement going forward.

God’s covenant of loving mercy and salvation still stands as strong as it ever was. Our spiritual posture is the only variable. This kind of comparison and contrast is a demanding but pertinent Lenten exercise, hopefully, targeted at something called “conversion.”

Our objective should always be to direct ourselves toward God and walk our way in His ways. Without objectives, we will have nowhere to go, and we’ll just keep

wandering aimlessly. We need to remember that Jesus once declared for all to hear: "I am the Way."

Every Friday during Lent we shall have our Stations of the Cross at 7 pm. Tonight was excellent even with a glitch on technological volume. Thank you so much Saint Ann School student-participants for such a wonderful 'Via Crucis'. Thanks to the school staff as well for such a great job in materializing this for us. And a special mention of thanks to Ms. Beth Meagher who set the whole spiritual atmosphere with her angelic voice and in-depth reflection. We will continue to live-stream all Friday Stations of the Cross so that you may be able to join together with your family at home. Please include in your prayer intentions the end of the pandemic.

No communal Penance Service is scheduled for this Lent. Confessions are available daily after the 8 am Mass and on Saturdays 3 pm-3:45 pm. Confessions will be held in the main sacristy, where priests and deacons vest. Kindly approach the celebrant immediately after the Mass to let him know.

The Annual Catholic Appeal is well underway. Kindly send in your pledges or donations in support of our Diocesan wide campaign for financial support. May I kindly encourage you to continue to support the Diocese of Trenton Annual Catholic Appeal? As the Bishop quoted Mother Theresa of Calcutta: "I can do things you cannot; you can do things I cannot, but together we can do great things."

Let us include in our Mass intentions this weekend those who have been gravely affected by the severe weather in our country and all the other parts of the world. It has been doubly challenging on all of us, but God made us a resilient people. We trust that in His loving care, we, His people, will emerge triumphant amidst the challenges we are experiencing. Let us continue to pray for each other.

Lent is a call for repentance, penance, and almsgiving. We are asked that the sacrifice we made to atone for our sins, we share to help the poor. Many of us will make a promise to give up something for Lent: some give up sweets, to others junk food, others give up eating at restaurants, others cut on smoking and so many other creative sacrifices. The money we saved on the "give-ups" are supposed to be given to the poor. To help you do this sacrifice, may I call your attention to the Poor Box that is located in between the cry room and the usher's room by the foyer. You may drop there your savings through your sacrifice every week as you come to visit the church. As a parish, let us start a Lenten sacrifice

offering for the poor. The money we collect by the end of Lent will be given to the poor within our area through the Society of St. Vincent De Paul (SVdP). We also have the food drive hosted by the Knights of Columbus this February 27-28. May this Lenten sacrifices we make bring us closer to God and to one another.

Please observe the pandemic trifecta: wear mask properly, sanitize constantly, and practice social distancing. Please be safe, healthy, and PRAY.

God Loves You.