

The Forty Days of Lent

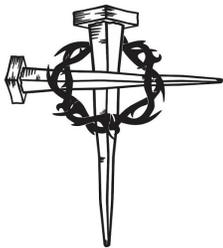
by Fr. James Kurtz, OFM Cap.

As Jesus fasted and prayed for forty days in the desert, so we who follow him fast and pray with him during the Lenten season. Yes, our Lord has given us 40 days to deepen our love for him and also for one another through prayer, fasting and almsgiving (works of mercy).

Lent is a time of grace: a time to renew and deepen our prayer, a time to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, a time to meditate on Jesus' passion and death on the Cross so as to see how much he loves us and to learn how to love others as he has loved us. Lent is a time to fast, to eat less, to be entertained less so that we can pray more, and more easily sacrifice ourselves in love for the service of others, a time to nail our sins to the Cross, to repent and to become the holy people he calls us to be.

Nail It To The Cross

By Karyn Roenigk



The Lenten theme for our grouping is "Nail It To The Cross," focusing on the Eleventh Station of the Cross. Each week the bulletin will have an article relative to the theme— What are we nailing to the cross?, How do we do this?, What's in it for me?, to name a few. The phrase "Nail It To The Cross" will be used frequently on our Lenten journey and as we move from the desert to the walk to Calvary to the miracle of Easter we will understand its meaning and rejoice for the purification and new life we will experience.

When you come to the Ash Wednesday Mass, you will notice purple pieces of paper at the ends of each of the pews. You will be asked to write on that paper what you would like to personally nail to the cross, that is, something or somethings that may be keeping you from living your faith fully. It may be a grudge you are holding or a fear to let go and experience God totally in a personal relationship, or perhaps it is a repeated weakness that you struggle with— loss of temper, selfishness with your talents or time, or anger over issues that just don't seem to get solved. Whatever— we all have something to nail to the cross in order to be free and more loving to Jesus Christ and deserving of his suffering for us. (If you cannot attend Mass on Ash Wednesday, the papers will be available throughout the Lenten season.)

At the distribution of ashes, we ask that you bring your paper and drop it in the basket provided. After Mass and throughout Lent the papers will be strung over the cross as a sign of our Lenten commitment and then collected on Good Friday and used to start the Easter Fire at the Vigil Mass. After receiving ashes adults will be given a small blunt nail to keep as reminder of our commitment. Keep it in your pocket or purse or place it where you will be reminded of the purification process of Lent.

When you come to Good Friday service or Stations of the Cross, please bring your nails with you. After venerating the cross, there will be a receptacle for you to drop your nail in as a sign that you have put it all on the cross for His love just as Christ did for our love.

"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

Because by your holy cross You have redeemed the world."