

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During this month of February we began the holy season of Lent, a time of penance, preparation, and renewal before the celebration of Easter. While we all desire to grow closer to Jesus during this season, it is important that we put into practice this striving for holiness. As Divine Mercy Parish, we have a number of opportunities to do so.

Every Lent is a chance for us to deepen our relationship with Jesus through prayer. One of the ways we are doing so is by praying the **Penitential Psalms**. Each week of Lent we are focusing on each of this seven Psalms: **Psalm 6** during the first week, **Psalm 32** during the second week, **Psalm 38** during the third week, **Psalm 51** during the fourth week, **Psalm 102** during the fifth week, and **Psalms 130 and 143** during Holy Week. Praying these Psalms using *lectio divina* can open our hearts to receive more of the word of God. Each week a group of our parishioners is meeting via ZOOM to pray over each Psalm of the week.

The Stations of the Cross is a powerful devotion prayed frequently during the season of Lent. Outdoors Stations of the Cross have been set up at both St. Lawrence O'Toole Church and St. Paschal Baylon Church, giving parishioners the opportunity to prayerfully walk with Jesus during His Passion. Video and audio recordings can be used for following the Stations and can be found on our website.

One of the disciplines that we are taking up during this season of Lent is **bearing wrongs patiently**, which is a spiritual work of mercy. An aspect of this spiritual work is giving up complaining and turning to the Lord in prayer more when faced with difficult situations and difficulties with others.

During Lent we are called upon to consider the needs of the poor and to serve them in a variety of ways. Our St. Vincent de Paul Society and Social Justice Committee have organized a food drive for the season of Lent, giving our parishioners a list of food items needed to support the charitable work of St. Augustine's here in Oakland.

As we journey through this time of Lent, may the Holy Spirit grant us all the grace of a renewed to follow Jesus closely as disciples striving to become saints.

Under His Mercy,  
Fr. Matthew