

February 7, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We want to thank all of our parishioners, and others from all over, for the spirited dialog we have been having over the last few weeks regarding Covid-19 and the current vaccine phase of the pandemic. Obviously, many of us carry strong beliefs on various sides of the many associated issues and it always helps to be open to a different point of view and to approach one another with Christian civility and respect with regard to these or any topic of importance. That being said, we had a great deal of constructive interaction with our podcast this past Sunday. We certainly thank all of our panelists and those who joined us online or watched a recorded version of the discussion. We encourage continued dialog on our Facebook page. Several viewers have offered respectful commentary and many links with further information regarding the various aspects of Covid-19, vaccination, and related subjects. We encourage everyone to keep inquiry and dialog going by posting to the page. If you were not able to view the podcast recording or wish to access the reference links from our panelists or viewers, you can view it all here: <https://www.facebook.com/SMV150/videos/804310286823356>

In the future, we hope to offer a similar discussion on other topics of importance to our parishioners. We will keep you posted on the next opportunity to explore timely issues together in the light of our Faith.

Please pray for our beloved deacons, Deacon Russ and Deacon Ed. Deacon Russ just had spinal surgery this past week. Deacon Ed recently discovered that he has an early stage of prostate cancer that appears, at this point, to be contained. He will be undergoing a minor surgery to treat it during the month of March. Lord Jesus, Divine Physician, please heal our good deacons! On a related note, this coming Thursday, February 11, is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, which has also been designated by the Pope as World Day of Prayer for the Sick. Please pray for all the sick and suffering to Our Lady that she will intercede with Her Son to heal many just as she has for thousands who have asked her prayers for healings and cures at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France.

Please support all the events happening this week in our collaborative especially the SMV Virtual Dinner Auction from February 10-13 and St. Stanislaus pre-order, take-out, Sweetheart Soup Dinner on February 14. We want to thank all of those who have worked so hard to make these events successful in challenging times.

Lastly, Lent begins in about 10 days on Ash Wednesday, February 17. Ready or not, Lent is almost here! Please look for a special mailing which is being sent to your home with a schedule for the Lenten events and services. Please take to prayerful discernment how you will live out Lent this year. Here is a brief but helpful article, which looks at Lent using an Orthodox or Eastern Catholic perspective, on how to prepare for Lent:

Five Ways to prepare for Lent - It's closer than you think

by Anna O'Neil - published on 02/10/17

Take a page from the Orthodox tradition-get ready now, so you can make the most of Lent.

I'm full of ideas for how to improve my spiritual life, but my mantra has been "I'll do it in Lent." What better time to pull myself together? But every year, when Lent does arrive, it comes like a thief in the night, which is ridiculous, since I had plenty of warning, after all. Year after year, I'm unprepared, and find myself scrambling to make resolutions that I think I can keep.

In this regard, I recently got an unexpected bit of help from the Orthodox tradition. I discovered a gem from them about how they approach the time before Lent begins. They see the Sundays leading up to Lent, called "Pre-Lent", as a time of special preparation, so that when Lent finally comes, they are prepared to give it their all. It just goes to show how important Lent is, and how vital the work of repentance is, that there is a time set aside to prepare for a time of preparation.

A form of this tradition is kept in parishes and communities using the Extraordinary Form, as well as the parishes of the Ordinariate and Byzantine Catholics, among others. Septuagesimatide (the name, from the Greek for "70 days", is in reference to 70 days before Easter) begins three Sundays before Ash Wednesday. Since March 1 is Ash Wednesday this year, in those parishes that observe Septuagesimatide there will be a certain focus on Lent starting with Septuagesima Sunday on February 12.

For those of us not getting a reminder at Sunday Mass or Divine Liturgy, I suspect the time between now and March 1 [**Note: This year Lent begins February 17**] is going to fly by even faster.

Here are a few simple ways that I'm going to try to get my soul in order this year, so that I'm ready for Lent when it comes.

1. Get moving physically

Being made of both body and soul, I'm still inclined to forget how much the body tends to influence the state of my soul. The days when I sit around on the couch for hours, I'm much, much less likely to have the energy to do the right thing. I give less time to my family, I'm less attentive to my husband, and I'm generally depressed about my own state of affairs, which leads to a subtle sense of hopelessness. But on the days when I've taken a walk, or exercised a bit, it couldn't be more different. I'm more cheerful, more hopeful, and have more energy to give to my family. It's the perfect state of mind to try to begin to make changes in my life.

2. Get moving mentally

Feed your mind. Even if you aren't doing spiritual reading, any reading at all might help more than you think. Just reading a whole article, instead of just the headline and then a quick skim, has a way of fostering the habit of following through on what you've started. It helps me learn not to give up easily. And the mind, like any muscle, needs to be used, to stay strong. Using your

mind more often can help deepen your understanding of your faith, which is rich beyond measure, and has so much to offer.

3. Start noticing your problem areas

You don't have to pick your resolutions yet, but now is the time to start thinking about what areas of your life need to be revived. Has your temper been especially short lately? (Mine has. I blame cabin fever and original sin). A good examination of conscience will direct you to resolutions that are personally right for you, and help you see your Lenten goals more clearly. There's also that old gimmick: try to name the seven deadly sins. The one you have the most trouble remembering is the one you may be struggling with.

4. Get yourself to the Sacraments

If you've already made a good examination of conscience, don't waste it. Go to confession! If you have time for daily Mass or Adoration, even if it's just once, you won't regret it. It's always the best possible decision to try to get closer to Jesus. That's the whole point of our whole life, after all.

5. Pray, pray, pray

You don't have to be in the mood, you don't have to have energy, and you don't have to have anything to say for your prayer to be a good one. What matters is perseverance. Never underestimate the power of forming a habit. It's so hard at first, but once it's part of your routine, it becomes second nature. And wouldn't you love it if daily prayer was second nature to you?

Taken from: <https://aleteia.org/2017/02/10/5-ways-to-prepare-for-lent-its-closer-than-you-think/>

Let's all do our best to make this upcoming Lent the most spiritually beneficial Lent for ourselves and our families!

In Jesus our Great High Priest who gave Himself for us,
Fr. Derda, Fr. Steve, Deacon Russ, Deacon Ed