

- A GRAIN OF MUSTARDSEED -

Dear Friends in Christ,

March 2023

We are already well into Lent's pilgrimage to the Cross of our Lord, learning anew where our 'treasure' is and, consequently, where our hearts are also. Failures, as much as successes in our Lenten disciplines, teach us the weakness of our mortal flesh and our total need for God's grace in overcoming the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Admittedly, such failures bring the temptation to be discouraged, but I would encourage us all, not just in this Lenten season, but also in a time wherein we are reckoning with our own short-comings as a parish and the world, to "disdain to be discouraged." That's a phrase used by one of my teachers, the late Rev. Dr. Robert Crouse, when distresses in the Church and persecution of the faithful were driving many from the task of faithful discipleship. We can look to ourselves or our parish with worldly estimations and find there all reasons to retract, withdraw or lose hope, but that's not really the way of Christ and His Body, is it? We are to see the Cross, opportunities for sacrifice, and seasons wherein we seem less 'successful' as times to grow in our faith, to put our trust in God who saves and to accept the burdens laid upon us. This holy season is given us to 'set our loves in order'; to see the depth of our sin and God's love all displayed by our Savior in His Passion and Death. We meditate upon His fasting and temptation, his life of sacrifice and healing all coming to the climax of His holy life: the Cross of Calvary. Given the intensification of our meditation on the Cross, it is not surprising that the last two weeks of Lent have, for centuries, been called Passiontide. In these last two weeks before Easter, beginning at the end of this month, we switch our liturgical colors from the Lenten array of unbleached linen and purple (the symbol of our penitence) to red (the color of Christ's blood shed for us). We veil all crosses and images in the Church, in effect drawing our attention from everything but the blood of Christ and His suffering. Our penitence continues to be sure, but lest we think our imperfectly penitent hearts are enough to win our salvation, our focus rests primarily on what Christ has done for us, not what we do for Him. How very plain and how very crucial the logic of Passiontide then becomes. It is absolutely necessary for us to know and confess that our triumph is not in ourselves, but through Christ our King. The Cross, so mysterious and scandalous to the unbeliever, is none other than our Savior's throne. His Blood, seemingly the violent end to an otherwise peaceful ministry, is the only source of our peace. As we draw closer to the Cross of our Lord, in our devotion and as Good Friday approaches, let us pray that our Lenten devotions serve their proper aim; that in denying self, we may see Christ and our salvation in Him more clearly; that the picture of perfect, redeeming love will serve to sanctify and reorder our loves. And may that renewed knowledge of the depth of God's love for us motivate us to 'celebrate with joy the Paschal mystery' on Easter Sunday and beyond. May God bless you with a continued Holy Lent and a Blessed Eastertide.

Yours in Christ, Edward L. Rix

LENTEN ACTIVITIES 2023

See the enclosed flyer for information on all our parish activities this Lent: Ember Days, Wednesday Family Nights (a video curriculum on the Holy Trinity by Fred Sanders), Sunday Evening Prayer, and Friday Stations of the Cross with addresses on Christ's Passion with reference to the Minor Prophets. Add these to our regular devotional and educational activities (daily offices, Bible studies, Sunday Adult Forum, Friday afternoon Confirmation classes, and one sees plenty of opportunities for spiritual discipline. In the spirit of my admonition above that we 'disdain to be discouraged,' I encourage and challenge each member of the parish to embrace these times of prayer and fellowship and commit themselves to prayer for our parish, its renewal and the supply of resources for its ministry.

MOTHERING SUNDAY

The Fourth Sunday in Lent (March 19th this year) is a traditional time for a bit of relaxation in the midst of our Lenten disciplines. Paul reminds the Galatians and us that our spiritual mother is the Church, realized in the world to come as the "Jerusalem which is above." This will be made especially poignant this year with the celebration (we hope) of Holy Baptism that day! The admonition in that Epistle to "rejoice" was styled in Latin "laetare" which can also be paraphrased "be refreshed," hence the other name for the day of "Laetare" or "Refreshment" Sunday. The traditional English treat of the day is Simnel Cake, which cakes we have enjoyed for years at our Mothering Sunday Coffee Hours. Volunteers are needed to make Simnel cakes either from their own recipe or from the one printed below.

SIMNEL CAKE

Ingredients: ¾ cup butter, 2 cups sugar, 2 cups flour, 4 eggs, 1/3 cup shredded lemon & orange peel, 1 cup currants, almond paste, ½ tsp salt. Cream the butter and sugar until smooth. Separate the eggs. Add the yolks to the butter and sugar and reserve the whites. Sift the flour and salt and add to the mixture. Dust the peel and currants with a little flour and add to the batter. Beat the egg whites until stiff and fold into the mixture. Line a cake tin with waxed paper and pour in half the batter. Add a layer of almond paste (easiest done by coarse-grating the almond paste when it is cold and sprinkling it in a generous layer) and then the remaining batter. Bake at 325 degrees for an hour or until an inserted toothpick or skewer removes dry. If desired, ice with a thin, white icing flavored with a few drops of almond extract.

THANK YOU

Many thanks to the Rix, Marvin and Jackson families and Ethan Fay for a lovely Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper (set-up, cooking and clean-up) and to those who joined us both from our parish and from St. Patrick's Chapel. Likewise thanks are extended to Margarete Marvin for providing both a lovely breakfast to the attendees of the Lenten Quiet Day and organizing a nice send-off for the Barrs.



"The kingdom of God...is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." *St. Luke 13:18-19*