



Fr. Tom Manjaly, SAC

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Beloved people of God,

During this holy season of Lent, I would like to share with you some of my reflections on the great events to come and my evaluation of some past parish events.

The last several months were eventful: Christmas, New Years, the parish feast, the volunteer's party and many other events were memorable. As for me, these were my first experiences with our parish community, and I would like to emphasize that I have been overwhelmed by your participation, cooperation and generosity. In all of these events, I could clearly see your commitment and love for your parish community. I appreciate it and thank you all for making these events successful by your presence and prayers.

It's now time to look ahead and include some important events in our personal calendars.

Season of Lent, Holy Week and Easter

The Lenten Season begins with **Ash Wednesday (March 6th)**. The length of Lent was established in the 4th century as 46 days (40 days, not counting Sundays). The real aim of Lent is, above all else, to prepare us for the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ. The better the preparation, the more effective the celebration will be. One can effectively relive the mystery only with purified mind and heart. The purpose of Lent is to provide that purification by weaning us from sin and selfishness. We accomplish this through self-denial and prayer, and by creating in us the desire to do God's will and to bring about His kingdom. The practices of fasting, moderation, and self-denial prepare us for Easter and are all pleasing to God.

Our parish offers several ways to make the Lenten Season meaningful and fruitful. My suggestions are to attend daily Mass whenever possible, take part in the Way of the Cross at least once a week, read and meditate on the passion and death accounts from the bible, practice acts of self-discipline, works of charity and mercy, repent and make a good confession. In other words, these 40 days should stand out as different from the rest of the year by practicing at least one or two of the above. Mind you, any sacrifice we make in this season has special merit for our salvation and the salvation of our loved ones.

All the details of the Lenten liturgical schedules will be in the parish bulletin and special flyers. I look forward to seeing you at our parish liturgical programs during Lent, especially during Holy week. Let's remember the two days of fast and abstinence in the universal church during Lent. These are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Other forth coming important events

1). Census. There is a threefold census in progress. The first is that which concerns the social activities. We want to organize social events to deepen the interpersonal relationships among our parish members.

The second census is an important one. The time and talent survey, invites everyone to come forward to be God's stewards with the time and talent God has given them. Remember God will ask us at the end of our life, "What did you do with the talent I gave you?" (Mt 25.15 ff.)!!!

The third one is the official parish survey which is meant to be a rigorous census. This is important so that we can have an accurate and complete count of this parish community. Those who do not respond will no longer be included on the parish membership list.

I request all to take part in our earnest endeavor to make our parish more up- to -date and come alive through all three of these census activities. I thank in advance the various individuals, commissions, councils and the staff who are working hard to make this a success.

2.) Bible sharing and praying group. Faith needs to be experienced and shared to grow. Here is an opportunity for all our parishioners, to achieve this goal. It is open to all who want to make their faith more experiential and pray more and be with like-minded individuals in prayer and sharing, discovering the person of Jesus as their personal friend and Savior. The first gathering is going to be on Wednesday, March 13 from 6-7 pm in the West Church. You can contact me personally (cell; 414 207 0385) to learn more or to clarify anything. I believe that the rock on which every Christian and every faith community should be built upon is the personal experience of a loving and caring God.

3.) Parish picnic. This year the parish picnic is planned for June 9. There will be an outdoor Holy Mass at 10 am which will be followed by games, fun and food on the East Church grounds. Let's come together to celebrate our parish family.

4.) In addition, we have: **Diocesan Reconciliation Day (April 10), Confirmation (May 1), First Communion (May 5), Mother's Day Blessing (May 12), Father's Day Blessing (June 16), and Independence Day (July 4)**

As I conclude, let me also express two of my strong recommendations: 1.) Our parish school needs your support to grow. Consider enrolling your children in our school and also encourage others whom you know to come to our school. I have seen firsthand the excellent education our school is providing and I assure you that our school has everything that we expect of a school in today's world. 2.) I pray daily for our parish in order to improve our daily Mass attendance. The same is true concerning the giving of Mass intentions. Twenty minutes (the duration for daily Mass) a day for the Lord can do wonders for you in the remaining 23 hours and 40 minutes of that day. That's how my experience goes.

Once again, I express my gratitude for all your cooperation, generosity and love for me and for our parish community. In particular I want to thank the principal and the school faculty. They have worked hard this scholastic year to ensure the success of our school. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the 8th graders on their graduation from our school. May God bless them all with a bright future. I also gratefully acknowledge and appreciate the services and commitment of the parish staff, all the volunteers, and all the different committees who make our parish an amazing faith community.

I wish for you all a Holy Season of Lent, the Easter Joy of the Risen Lord, and a wonderful spring season as nature renews itself.

God bless you,

Fr. Manjaly



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