

Dear Friends,

We begin our first week of Lent, a season that invites a change of disposition, both in mind and heart. This change is an act of conversion that requires steely determination and courageous trust in God's grace.

A tradition practiced at the end of each Mass was begun by the then pastor of St. Mary's, Fr. Thomas Brennan: congregants were asked to remain in their pews at the end of the recessional hymn to pray three Hail Mary's whose intentions are for 1. The Universal Church, 2. The Local Church, 3. The next parishioner to die. Not everyone is familiar with this tradition -- I call it to your attention so that it does not slip away. There is great need for prayers in our Church, especially with the abuse crisis. The local Church continues to go through adjustments to meet the current needs of these times, and those among us who pass from earthly life into the next need our prayer, just as we expect them to intercede for us in heaven. Let us take one full minute (sixty seconds) of silence after the conclusion of the final hymn. Hail Mary prayers can go by quickly, so I propose a fourth Hail Mary: for our parish in time of transition. Our parish has gone through many changes in just the past few months, not to mention what has happened in the past few years....and decades. It's time that we pray together so that we can stay together. An experienced old pastor told me before I entered the seminary: "the seminarian who prays, stays." The same can be said about other vocations and forms of Christian life. It is also applicable to a parish. We especially need these prayers as we transition to one campus and vision what this campus needs to look like in order to accommodate our current and future needs.

We also need prayer to navigate through changes in our parish staff. A few weeks ago, Laurretta Beale used my bulletin article space to announce her resignation as Youth Minister. She and her daughter will join her husband David, who was transferred to Taiwan by Corning, Inc. This is a tremendous loss for our parish. Laurretta has built an amazing program for our youth, especially in service, prayer, and preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Suffice it to say, she is not replaceable.

Another change: a few weeks ago, Carrie Jake accepted a position as a teacher at All Saints Academy. This shift in duties will ensure a solid presence of Catholic thought and teaching in the school and parish. Carrie has worked tirelessly to get families from the school involved with the parish, families in the parish involved with the school, families back into the practice of Catholic faith. Like Laurretta, Carrie is impossible to replace. However, as she remains in the area and in the parish, she will continue to be a valuable resource to us. She is my "go to" for pastoral and theological advice, so I am glad I'll be able to continue to count on her support as a colleague and a parishioner.

In light of these staffing changes, a group of parishioners who represent the various dimensions of faith formation have been working to create a new job description: Director of Faith Formation for All Saints Parish. The plan is to hire someone to direct the program and animate the involvement of the parishioners. He/She will have responsibility for either the Children's Ministry or Youth Ministry program, and will foster a noticeable spiritual growth in youth, instill the value of service projects, maintain communication of the ministry's schedule, as

well as discern the availability of parents to volunteer. The new hire will work with the committee to build a core team of volunteers in addition to serving on the faith formation team. To facilitate this process, a survey will be released in two parts: the first to the participants in the youth ministry and their parents. Following that, a survey to the parents in children's ministry. These surveys will be presented at the end of March.

This is an opportunity to take a close look at our current needs, and to continue to grow our faith formation program into the future. We have a better and more positive alternative; this is not just another change we have to endure. Look at where we have come in the past few months! We have grown as Christians because we not only acknowledge the pains and difficulties of letting go, but also see a vision of the future.

These changes coupled with Lenten spiritual discipline go hand-in-hand. As I have said before: change will happen with or without us. Do we want to engage it or avoid it? Do we want to participate in the process or be left behind? This process involves discussion and listening, prayer and discernment to make the right decisions for our parish.

#### **Update to the Lenten Calendar:**

Day of Penance revision: Fr. Curtiss will be assisting as an outside confessor for the Day of Penance. However, we have had to adjust his time. Fr. Curtiss will be available for the Sacrament of Penance from 2:30 to 4:30pm. A sign will indicate where he will celebrate the sacrament.

My friends, let us add, even if only a little, a deeper sense of the Lenten practices: we as individuals need this time of 40 days to listen to the Lord -- to turn our hopes to Him and shed the sinful ways that are a barrier to our holiness. We, as a parish, body, a family, need this time to grow together in love, trust, and hope for the future.

**The Five Fridays Lenten series.** A different speaker each week will offer a reflection. Each talk will be given within the context of Vespers, which will be followed by Stations of the Cross, and then a simple supper in Rogers Hall. I am looking forward to this series so that I can, with all of you, listen and pray. Each week in the bulletin, I'll introduce the speaker and his topic.

This Friday, March 15, Fr. Hage, Pastor of St. Mary's in Hamilton, NY with a mission at St. Joan of Arc, Morrisville, NY, will join us. His topic is "Silence is the Language of God." Fr. Hage is a graduate of St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, where we were classmates. Trivia fact: Fr. Hage is a relative of parishioners, Mary Lou Wood, Mary Ellen Monahan, and Ellie Nasser.

In Christ,

Fr. Jones