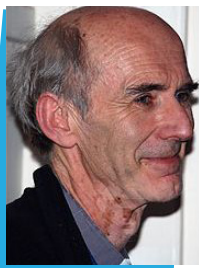


Life to the Full:

Living faith within our families

PRAY
STOP
GO

Monthly newsletter for parents: **February 2018**



Letting go. Letting God.

Fr Digby offers some thoughts on how to deepen faith during the season of Lent.

Within six weeks, we'll celebrate the most important feast of the Church's year, Easter. Through baptism, we share in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ and then, at Pentecost, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are given the new life of Christ to be lived out in this life but to be experienced in its fullness in heaven, sharing the very glory of God's life.

Perhaps all that sounds a bit much to get the head round! No matter. Let's just receive the message that Easter is worth preparing for. The period of preparation is 'Lent', a word closely connected with 'Spring' and new life. Contrary to some images of Lent being bleak, one of the prayers of the Church calls this penitential season a 'joyful season of grace'.

As outlined in the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday we're asked to emphasise three aspects of Christian living: prayer, fasting and alms giving. Our children in Catholic schools might have mentioned the 'pray-stop-go' theme, designed to be the equivalent and easier for them to grasp.

Although some families aren't used to conversations together about faith, Lent can provide opportunities

which make it easier. So, for example, many of us can't fail to notice the black or grey blotch on the forehead that appears on Ash Wednesday and sometimes doesn't get washed off, even the next day!

These ashes, distributed each year as a mark of our repentance, provide a visible opening for a chat together about the important meaning of Lent and how prayer, fasting and giving can be a great preparation for Easter.

If others in the family are able to be honest about the struggle to stick to 'Lenten resolutions', that can help us support one another as we also struggle. Jesus in the Gospel emphasises how we will be rewarded by the Father "who sees everything done in secret" but we can still be open with one another and so learn from those close to us. To know that someone is praying for me can be a great help in moments of weakness and temptation.

And there will certainly be such moments of weakness and temptation for anyone who takes Lent seriously. As Jesus himself had to face very real temptations for forty days in the desert and had to confront Satan himself, so we can

expect the same. When we try to resist an area of our life for example, where we know some addiction has set in - and who hasn't got that! - we will find our ego doesn't let go easily.

What is known as the twelve-step programme has helped many of us in that battle of letting go, letting God. Yes, spiritual progress towards Easter is a gift but we'll need to play our part by wanting that gift and creating the conditions to receive it. Our Lady and the saints are with us too in this battle, praying for us, as are departed loved ones in the communion of saints.

Prayer

Dear Lord,
Thank you for this special season of grace that is Lent.
Bless each member of our family in accordance with our need as we journey together towards Easter, through Christ Our Lord.

Amen

