

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

March 5, 2023

The liturgical calendar of the Church provides a tangible rhythm to our lives as believers and members of the Church. Each calendar year is marked by certain celebrations and observances that invite us to enter more fully into the life of Jesus and the Church that He established. Our celebration of *Ash Wednesday* on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and the commencement of the Lenten Season are a prime example of this



rhythm the Church provides for our spiritual lives as believers. In a very real and strong way, Lent is an annual reminder of our need to return to the Lord with all of our hearts. (See *Joel 2:12*) Yes, we can and should return to the Lord at all times throughout the year, but the emphasis that Lent puts on this reality is particularly meaningful and inspiring. In the introduction to our prayer booklet entitled Daily Reflections for Lent: Not by Bread Alone 2023, the author explains that “The very fact that Lent comes around *annually* emphasizes that God’s invitation is *perennial*. Growing in wisdom and goodness is not a matter of a one-time, one-chance, absolute conversion accomplished in a dramatic, salvific lightning flash. Instead, it’s a lifelong process of second (and third, and ever-renewing) chances, one made necessarily repetitive by our sinful nature. In this spirit, Lent’s familiar Scriptures and rituals invite memories of the conversions large and small that they once inspired, reminding us that despite backsliding and sin, God’s arms are always open, longing to enfold us prodigals yet again.” (Susan H. Swetnam) “God’s arms are always open” as He constantly extends His mercy to us and calls us to Himself. A meaningful Lent does indeed remind us that we are sinners, but it simultaneously reminds us that *God is rich in mercy and never tires of forgiving us*. This Lent, we celebrate our Communal Penance Service with individual Confessions on Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Please join us for this experience of God’s mercy. Also, to make you aware, Bishop O’Connell has extended a dispensation to all the faithful of the Diocese



from the Lenten obligation to abstain from eating meat on Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, so we can enjoy our traditional corned-beef meal on Saint Patrick’s Day. Please refer to the article in the bulletin or on the website concerning this dispensation. Finally, I want to invite you to a special *Mass for Life* that will be celebrated on Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> for the *Solemnity of the Annunciation*. The flier in the bulletin or on the website has all of the details.

Lenten Blessings,

Father John Large