

Ash Wednesday, 2015
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
February 18, 2015

Over the past several even many years, I have noticed an interesting style of living among people:

- rather than the traditional 3 meals a day, like breakfast, lunch and supper, people seem to eat almost any time of day, and maybe some eat all day the munchers and grazers. Food shops are numerous and food kiosks dot every place people gather. IT is not odd to enter a mall and see people eating pizza at 10:00 a.m. or at 3:00 p.m.
- we may have lost complete touch with how we spend money; credit and debit cards make money accessible to us, and maybe even money we don't have to spend.
- and the fact that every man, woman and child now has their own telephone, we have little or no time when we cannot be contacted, interrupted, or contact and interrupt others. The only one, it seems, who doesn't have a telephone is God Himself. We are always connected, but maybe again with everyone but God.

And so today the trumpet sounds. It calls us to stop, look and listen, to who we are, and to who God is. And the trumpet sounds to call us to stop, look and listen to who God calls us to be. The trumpet proclaims a fast, a season of prayer, a time of less self-indulgence and more sharing of alms. Lent is a season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Why do we fast and abstain? We give up food so we can know at least something of the hunger of those who have little or no food.

We eat more simply so we can experience something of how many people eat all of the time.

One other part of fasting and abstaining can be making a real effort not to waste food. Children: eat everything that is on your plate. It is documented that here in the United States we waste food enough to feed an additional 25 million people. Restaurants, supermarkets and schools are the places of most waste. As you fast and abstain these next weeks, these are good things to keep in mind.

Also, fasting is a way to clear ourselves of excess, and a less sluggish body can make us more free and open spiritually. I remember a Lutheran pastor saying to me once, that when he keeps to his one day a week fast, he feels more open to God when developing his Sunday sermon, and even more open to his people pastorally.

Why do we pray? Ideally we pray in order to stay in touch with God. During Lent try to petition God less, and just pray for the coming of the Kingdom. “Thy will be done” might be our best prayer. For a few days try tossing away your usual regiment of prayers, and just pray in your heart listen to God. To do this, you will need to set aside your telephone, I-pad, etc. Simply be present to God using the wisdom of morning, evening and meal time to be in touch with God is still a good idea it keeps us in touch with God throughout the day. Praying before eating in a restaurant is a great way to give witness to God in your life.

And then there is alms: Why do we give alms or charity? Spending less on food and even on entertainment during Lent is more than just a way to 'save money'. We spend less so that we can distribute our money more justly among those in need.

The fasting, abstaining, prayer and almsgiving of Lent all fit together.

In your pews you will find a Lenten packet of material. It includes schedules and some aids for your Lenten Reconciliation (confession). I draw your attention especially to the Rice Bowl that is included. Inside the Rice Bowl is a Lenten calendar, with stories of people who are helped by our charity and alms, and also some simply food recipes you can try. This is great guide for how to use your Rice Bowl during these next weeks.

Hopefully we have extra packets in your pews, so if you know someone who is not here today, or someone you can invite to rejoin us for this Lenten Season, please take some extra packets with you today. They are meant to be shared.

The trumpet has sounded! May we grow together and grow with God during these next weeks.