

From the Pastor:

We come to the end of the first chapter of Mark's Gospel with the healing of a leper. The word translated "leprosy" comes from the Greek word *lepros* which means "scaly." According to the Law of Moses, any person exhibiting this skin disorder was considered "unclean" and thus prohibited from being a part of the community, or involved in the community of worship. Such a man came to Jesus one day and begged him for healing. Kneeling before our Lord, he said, "**If you chose, you can make me clean.**" Jesus was deeply touched and responded in love, "**I do choose. Be made clean!**" Mark tells us "Immediately, the leprosy left him, and he was made clean." During our liturgy, we all cry: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. Only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." That is, say the word, and my leprosy, my sin, my way of turning from God, will be forgiven. So let us ask forgiveness for our own sins, imperfections, and poor choices, and for healing of the leprosy that we believe that we see in our brothers and sisters. It is always better to follow Jesus' merciful example, to pray and not to hate.

It is timely to remember that in the early Church, when Lent was a time for the reconciliation of public penitents. The penitents would come to the church on Ash Wednesday, wearing a penitential garment like a sackcloth, and be sprinkled (on the top of their heads) with ashes. Then they would be ritually expelled from the assembly to do their penance for forty days, returning to the church on Holy Thursday, when they would be readmitted to the sacraments. With time, the expulsion of penitents disappeared, but the ashes remained and became a call to penance of all the faithful.



In Scripture, sackcloth and ashes are the signs of penance. This year, due to Covid-19, we will use a swab to place the ashes on your forehead. The ashes are our sackcloth. They are a reminder that we are **all** sinners, "not worthy," yet welcomed into the church. Ashes are sacramental, like the blessing of throats or signing ourselves with holy water. They are not to be confused with the (large "S") Sacraments. Our focus is not the ashes, the focus is the Eucharist and our journey with Christ. It is my prayer that the Lenten journey our three parishes be one of conversion and sacrifice. May we turn from what keeps us from God – and from one another! May this period be one of surrender, conversion, reconciliation, and hope in Christ.

Our Lady of Grace passed the Diocesan annual inspection this year. This is good news, as we are always concerned that the inspector will find more expensive problems to be fixed. Also, last Tuesday, my *almost* weekly **Tuesday Chat** took place at **Our Lady of Grace** where we toured the worship and Faith Formation space. Next Tuesday, we will do the Tuesday Chat at OLG again, with an interview with long time parishioners, **John and Lorraine Lorenc**. You can tune in anytime on the IC webpage, ICGlenville.com.

At **St. Joseph's Church**, I had the opportunity to visit the depths of the school building along with **Tom Neals** and **Scott Sutherland**. Our current plan is to move the parish office functions to the office space in the Rectory – more details to follow! There are many memories in the building on MacArthur, a structure that has long served the parish in numerous ways. With most Faith Formation activities and other meetings being virtual, it makes sense to consolidate into a smaller space at this time.

Opportunities for Lenten reflection are being offered in the form of a **Lenten Book Club** and a **Women's Retreat**, hosted variously by Grace Fay, Roberta Quinn, and Patty Neumann. These are virtual programs; I hope many of you will take advantage of them.

While leaving St Joseph's last Sunday, I had nice conversations with the folks preparing **Valentine Day packages** for the homebound. What a beautiful gesture of charity and good will.

Immaculate Conception continues to host many Trustee and Ministry meetings. **Tom Collins** from Our Lady of Grace is meeting with all staff and various ministries so that we can move forward in a more unified way. We are grateful for his input and his suggestions.

You are invited to join with other Christians in the **Spring 40 Days for Life Campaign** – forty days of *prayer and fasting* for an end to abortion during Lent, **February 17 through March 28**. You are also invited to stand and peacefully pray during a 40-day vigil in the public right-of-way outside Planned Parenthood at 1040 State Street, Schenectady, and to help spread the word about this important community outreach. Go to www.40daysforlife.com/schenectady, for daily meditations, blog posts and more.

All three parishes will be handing out **Lenten prayer booklets** after mass this weekend. If you don't get one, please let us know. While supplies are limited, we do hope to get one for each family or household. You will also find the annual **Rice Bowls** which benefit **Catholic Relief Services**. This is a beautiful way to encourage your children – and yourselves – to offer a Lenten sacrifice for others. A few coins a day, your loose change, the random dollar if you have it – it all adds up to the gift of life for those in need.

Our Lenten Schedule is printed in this bulletin, and will be updated as Lent progresses.

Until next week, be well, do good deeds, and say your prayers. *Happy Valentine's Day to all of you!*

Fr. Jerry

OUR PRAYER: Loving God, be present to us and grant us wisdom, so that we who may feel anxious about change might trust in Your love, and rest in the Changelessness that is You.

LENTEN INFO

Ash Wednesday: Mass will be celebrated at our churches on February 17, and ashes will be imposed after the homily at each mass:

at St. Joseph's at 7:30 am - walk in

at our Lady of Grace at Noon - pre-register as usual beginning one week prior

and at Immaculate Conception at 9 am and 6 pm - beginning Feb. 10, use Sign Up Genius on the website or call the rectory.

Wednesday Soup Lunch Delivery, compliments of IC Youth Ministry, will be offered February 17-March 24.

If you would like soup delivered, call 518-399-9203, email youthministry@icglenville.com or complete the online form on the IC website.

During Lent:

Weekly Mass at IC will take place Mondays at 9 am, Tuesdays at 9 am and 6 pm, and Wednesdays at 9 am. No pre-registration.

Reconciliation will be available at additional times. Watch for info.

Stations of the Cross will be prayed weekly on Fridays at IC at 7 pm, except for March 26, when *Mary's Way of the Cross* will be prayed at St. Joseph's at 7 pm.

Good Friday Stations will be prayed at Noon at Our Lady of Grace and at 3 pm at IC.

Holy Week schedule is still to be decided.