

### ***Ash Wednesday***

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, which comes rather late this year; it has been kind of nice to have a little bit of a longer break between Christmas Time and the start of Lent, hasn't it? Please note our schedule of both Masses and Word Services for Ash Wednesday. The Liturgy Committee reviewed the schedule we had been using and came up with this revised schedule, trying to make the times of the liturgies a little more accessible for the rhythm of the day.

Please take note of the special insert we have included in this bulletin, giving some background information about the meaning and spirituality of Ash Wednesday.

### ***Lent***

With Ash Wednesday, Lent begins. Ash Wednesday and the Thursday, Friday and Saturday that follow make up a kind of prelude or introduction to the Lenten season proper, which begins with the First Sunday of Lent on March 9. The document *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar* reminds us, "Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance."

All of us need to take very seriously the discipline that Lent calls us to as a privileged time for discernment and spiritual growth; in essence, the entire Church goes on retreat during the Lenten season. I urge all parishioners to avail themselves of the many opportunities to participate in the many spiritual activities that will be offered in the parish as advertised in the bulletin now and in the weeks ahead. Next Sunday's bulletin will have a special insert highlighting some of the particular aspects of the spiritual meaning of Lent and our liturgical celebration of the season here at OLPH. Remember too that we are called to three penitential practices in particular: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. How will you incorporate each of these traditional practices into your life?

Permit me to highlight one thing right now as a "Save the Date" announcement: our Lenten Parish Mission will be March 24, 25 and 26, given by Msgr. Charles Fink, Spiritual Director at St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, New York. Msgr. Fink is a very holy and insightful priest and you will want to be there; more information to come soon.

I have one additional thought to offer you as you prepare to embark on the Lenten journey. We often think of "giving something up" for Lent, but unfortunately this can turn Lent into nothing more than a kind of endurance contest where we stay away from something for 40 days (chocolate, cake, ice cream, smoking, alcohol, social media...*whatever*...) but then go right back to it once Lent is over. I always encourage people to not give something up but to **take something extra on**. In other words, don't ask yourself what you will *not* do for Lent, but ask yourself what you *will* do: what extra prayer, what extra service, what extra acts of kindness and love, what extra spiritual practices, *etc.*, will you willingly take on in order to grow in holiness and deepen your relationship with the crucified-risen Lord and your unity with others? What will you do to GROW personally and spiritually during Lent, so that come Easter there really is new, risen life inside you? Think about it...

### ***Little Black Book for Lent***

It appears that the "Little Black Book" we offered for Lent was a huge success...as the saying goes, they went "like hotcakes" last weekend at all the Masses! I don't know if any are left this weekend. If there are some left, and you do not have one, you'd better take it while you can! If not, and you did not get one, please accept my apologies. If we need to order a greater quantity for next year, we will do so.

### ***Adult Education Course: the Historical Development of the Mass***

I am pleased to be offering a five-week adult education course on the historical development of the Mass. This is considered an "advanced" course in that those who have their Basic Theology Certificate from the Diocese can use the credit from this course toward an Advanced Certificate. I already offered the Basic

(i.e., Introductory) Course in Liturgy a while ago, and will do so again soon for those who missed it the first time. I hope you will consider attending this course; it will deepen your understanding of the Mass and provide interesting and important information about how the Mass has changed and developed over the centuries. A common theme running through the course will be the understanding of what it means for all of us to participate in the Mass. Also, as you might expect, I can guarantee you some fun and laughs along the way...bring your sense of humor along with your notebook!

### ***New Liturgical Ministers***

Have you heard that we are looking for people to become Readers, Extraordinary Ministers and Holy Communion, and Ushers? (*That was intended to be funny...you know how much we have been aggressively advertising this for a few weeks now!*) I will underscore again how important it is for us to increase our ranks in these liturgical ministries, and I ask you to seriously ponder the idea that it's not up to someone else to step up, but rather it's up to YOU! It's time for you to accept your responsibility to support the liturgical life of OLPH by offering yourself as a minister in one of these ministries. See the information elsewhere in the bulletin and/or contact me or the head of the ministry you are interested in for more information.

### ***Altar Server Recruitment***

Boys and girls in fourth grade and above: you're not exempt from what I just said! You too are being called upon to offer yourself in service to the church and to your brothers and sisters; in your case, you are being called to become altar servers! I guarantee you will have a good time doing it and it will be wonderful thing for your family. See the information elsewhere in this bulletin about signing up.

### ***Liturgical Formation of Ministers***

You may have noticed that in many ways we have "upped the ante" concerning our liturgical ministries; we are taking very seriously the need for all ministers to be properly formed, and to not just start doing their ministry without being given any background or formation. We

are also taking very seriously the ongoing formation of those who are already serving as liturgical ministers through regular meetings for spiritual development in addition to business matters. These meetings are not considered "extra" but rather are part of the responsibility of being a liturgical minister and are part-and-parcel of what it means to carry out the ministry.

The reason for this is found in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy at article 29, which tells us that all liturgical ministers — readers, servers, musicians, ushers, *etc.* — "ought to discharge their office...with the sincere devotion and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people. Consequently, they must all be **deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy**, in the measure proper to each one, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner." (emphasis mine)

Think about that phrase: "deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy." That means we're talking about something much more and much deeper than just "how to." It's important for liturgical ministers to be **formed**, not just trained. Such formation involves coming to understand more deeply the theology of the Mass, what it means to participate at Mass, and what the role of each liturgical ministry is within the Body of Christ. Liturgical formation focuses not on the "what" but on the "who" of the minister: on his or her liturgical and spiritual formation as a follower of Jesus Christ, and how that discipleship is expressed within one's role in the liturgical assembly. Ultimately, our participation in liturgy is all about our being plunged into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, and that's something all liturgical ministers — indeed, *everyone* who participates in liturgy — need to constantly deepen and explore one's whole life.

It's so important that we understand all liturgical ministries not as something we just "get up and do" but rather as something that is a ministry and an offering within the Body of Christ, an offering that required ongoing formation, development and growth.

***In conclusion...***

Together, let's aim high in Christ.  
Together, let's bring out the best in each other.  
Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A  
GIFT.

Sincerely,