

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

## LENT... TIME TO GET RID OF OUR VICES

*There was a wife who noticed on her husband's workbench in the basement a broken vise. Being a very thoughtful person, she decided to buy him a new one for his birthday. She went to the hardware store and asked the salesman, "Do you have any heavy duty vices?" "Sorry, ma'am," he replied, "I gave them all up for Lent." Well, the spelling makes a bit of a difference!*

*This past week we celebrated Ash Wednesday and began the Season of Lent. This forty day period of penance is usually a time for Christians to give up some of their vices whether heavy duty or not. The word Lent actually comes from an old English word that means "Springtime." Just as in nature we will soon be celebrating a season of growth and re-birth, so too Lent is a time for us to break forth spiritually into a new life.*

*Last Wednesday when we received our ashes, the priest marked us with the Sign of the Cross and said, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." What does this mean? The words are a reminder of our mortality and the fact that this life is fleeting and passes rather quickly. We all get so "bogged down" with the good things of this life that we cannot then easily rise to the things of God and eternity. The Season of Lent is a good opportunity for us to "tune up" our soul spirituality speaking as we head towards Easter. Traditionally speaking, the Church recommends three ways to do this-they are prayer, fasting and almsgiving.*

*First prayer. Simply put, prayer is talking to God. Or if you want a better definition, here is one given by the great Saint Teresa of Avila. Saint Teresa said, "Prayer is nothing more than spending time alone with the one I know loves me." Jesus is our best friend and two friends should like to spend time together!*

*Lent can be a time to give more time and attention to our prayer life. Whether it is attending daily Mass, saying the rosary, participating in the Stations of the Cross or visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, increasing our prayer will help to strengthen us on the inside and make us happier and healthier people!*

*Then there's fasting. This is a tough one for many of us because we are really attached to all the goodies that are readily available to us in our American culture. A little girl was once asked in religion class for a definition of Lent. She responded, "It's when the Christians begin their diet!" Well, fasting is not dieting-though we all could afford to shed a few pounds. By fasting from certain foods that we like, or going without the desert, the cocktails or the cigarettes, we are making a sacrifice, getting control over our unruly desires and growing in holiness.*

*If we can't fast from food because of our health, there are other things that we can fast from-like gossip, the internet, TV or aggressive driving. We won't harm our health doing those things!*

*Finally, there is almsgiving. This might mean giving financially to some worthy organization or cause. But it might mean something else too. It could mean giving of ourselves by donating our time and energy to helping the less fortunate around us by real service. Writing a check at times can be very easy. Giving this way, we make it personal and truly fulfill the words of Jesus who said, "Anything you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me!"*

*Yes, Lent has begun! It is a time for us to do some spiritual housecleaning and get rid of the "vices" that foul up our lives. Let's pray to keep our resolutions the next forty days!*

*Sincerely in Christ,  
Father Jerome*