

🎵 🎵 Grace Notes from the System Chaplain 🎵 🎵

March 2019

Having just returned from a vibrant three days with the Catholic School Chaplains of Ontario at our annual conference and retreat, I find myself more energised than ever to go forward into Lent.

One of our speakers shared a maxim with us which I thought was very worth sharing and which you, in turn, may care to share with your colleagues and students.

"Most things will start working properly again if you unplug them for a few minutes...including people!"

At a time when we are beginning to see more and more studies of the negative effects of our use of portable communication devices and our passion for social media, it may make a lot of sense to follow the example of Jesus in withdrawing to a quiet place now and then. (See Luke 5:16)

Certainly, our efforts at sharing the prayer form of Christian Meditation help us all, including our students, to be able to spend some time "unplugged" and to invite God to speak to us.

It is fairly unusual for us to have an Eighth Week in Ordinary Time occurring before Lent. Easter is a moveable feast, celebrated on the first Sunday after (not on) the first full moon on or after the Spring Equinox - considered to be March 21st. Thus, Easter can be as early as March 22nd or as late as April 25th. The date for Ash Wednesday is then determined as the Wednesday before the First Sunday of Lent and Palm Sunday is the Sixth Sunday of Lent. The forty days of Lent include Ash Wednesday, the Thursday, Friday and Saturday which follow, and then Monday to Saturday of the six weeks of Lent (4 + [6 X 6]). Sundays are not days of fasting and abstinence, although we refrain from singing the Gloria and Alleluias during this time.

During the first week of March this year, we transition through Ash Wednesday, into the season of Lent, the time of recalling our baptism or preparing for it. Those preparing for baptism at Easter through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults observe a number of rituals and scrutinies during the Lenten Season. At this time, all Catholics are called to pay closer attention to God's Word, and to pay more attention to prayer, almsgiving and penitence. At Ash Wednesday services, we have a mark imposed on our foreheads with ashes made from burning the palms from the preceding year's Palm Sunday. This reminds us of the sackcloth and ashes worn by penitents in earlier times.

We are encouraged at the least to set aside all Fridays in Lent as days of prayer, fast and abstinence.

Shrove Tuesday – Pancake Day – was traditionally the day on which one went to be "shriven" or absolved after confessing one's sins, prior to the start of Lent. In many countries it became traditional to use up and eat all the foods one would give up for Lent, such as eggs, butter, fat and sugar. (You find a parallel in the Jewish practice of searching the house to remove anything with leaven -yeast- prior to Passover.) It was also customary in some cultures to give up eating meat for the duration.



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Thus, one celebrated “Fat Tuesday” or Mardi Gras. Although not many people maintain this type of fast through the whole of Lent any more, we mark the occasion by having pancake and sausage meals on Shrove Tuesday in recognition that the next day will be Ash Wednesday. In some countries pancake races are held where people run, tossing a pancake in a frying pan!

We are reminded that, even if we do not keep the forty-day fast, we are still called to follow the teachings of the Gospel especially in Lent, in fasting, almsgiving, prayer and works of mercy.

Ash Wednesday and **Good Friday** are days of fasting and abstinence in the Roman Catholic Church in Canada. Fridays are days of abstinence from meat; however, Catholics may substitute special acts of charity or piety on this day.

Fasting is depriving ourselves of food in order to be more open to prayer, to share in the suffering of those who are starving, and to save money to give to the poor.

Abstinence from meat is expected of all those 14 years of age and older and fasting applies to people from 18-59. In both cases people should be in a state of health which will not be adversely affected by the practice.

Many of our Grade two students may be making their First Reconciliation during Lent; we wish them a positive experience in this Sacrament of Healing. It’s a good time for us all to review the Sacrament of Reconciliation as we mature into new understandings of our relationships with God and Jesus with every year that passes. As Catholics we are encouraged to receive this sacrament at least three times a year: during Advent, during Lent and somewhere between Easter and the end of the Church Year on Christ the King. It’s part of our “Renewing the Promise” of our Baptism!

The following may be helpful in preparing for confession. Above all, do not be afraid. If you are hesitant about what to do, ask the priest for help:

- **Greeting:**
The priest welcomes the penitent warmly and greets him or her with kindness.
- **Sign of the Cross:**
Then the penitent makes the Sign of the Cross, which the priest may also make.
- **Invitation to Trust in God:**
The priest invites the penitent to have trust in God using one of the formulas in the ritual or similar words. If the penitent is unknown to the priest, it is proper for the penitent to indicate his or her state in life (married, single, or clergy), the time of his or her last confession and anything else that may help the confessor in exercising his ministry.
- **Reading of the Word of God:** (sometimes omitted if there are a large number of penitents)
- **Confession of Sins and Acceptance of Satisfaction:**
The penitent confesses his or her sins and accepts the prayers or deeds that the priest proposes as a penance.
- **Prayer of the Penitent and Absolution:**
The priest asks the penitent to express sorrow by praying one of the prayers found in the ritual * or in his or her own words. The priest then prays the Prayer of Absolution, to which the penitent responds: "Amen."

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- **Proclamation of Praise and Dismissal:**

The priest continues: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good." The penitent responds: "His mercy endures forever." The priest then dismisses the penitent.

***You can offer one of these Acts of Contrition as the Prayer of the Penitent:**

Act of Contrition (traditional)

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

Act of Contrition (alternate form)

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

An Act of Contrition inspired by the Gospels

Father of mercy, like the prodigal son I return to you and say: "I have sinned against you and am no longer worthy to be called your child." Christ Jesus, Savior of the world, I pray with the repentant thief to whom you promised Paradise: "Lord, remember me in your kingdom."

Holy Spirit, fountain of love, I call on you with trust: "Purify my heart, and help me to walk as a child of light."

An Act of Contrition inspired by the Gospels

Lord Jesus, you opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick, forgave the sinful woman, and after Peter's denial confirmed him in your love. Listen to my prayer: forgive all my sins, renew your love in my heart, help me to live in perfect unity with my fellow Christians that I may proclaim your saving power to all the world.

An Act of Contrition to Our Lord Jesus

Lord Jesus, you chose to be called the friend of sinners. By your saving death and resurrection free me from my sins. May your peace take root in my heart and bring forth a harvest of love, holiness, and truth.

An Act of Contrition to Jesus, the Lamb of God

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Lamb of God; you take away the sins of the world. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit restore me to friendship with your Father, cleanse me from every stain of sin in the blood you shed for me, and raise me to new life for the glory of your name.

An Act of Contrition inspired by Psalm 51

Lord God, in your goodness have mercy on me: do not look on my sins, but take away all my guilt. Create in me a clean heart and renew within me an upright spirit.

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

A Short Form for Children

O my God, I am very sorry for all my sins, because they displease you, who are all good and deserving of all my love. With your help, I will sin no more. Amen.

You can find a Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation for Children which you may find useful at: <https://www.rcan.org/sites/default/files/files/8%20Guide%20for%20Children.pdf>

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By now you should have received some Lenten items to help your school community keep “this solemn fast”. I hope that your staff and students will benefit from the calendars and booklets which were sent out. Shortly after they were sent I received an enquiry about “Resurrection Eggs”, something with which I was unacquainted. Having done a little research, I pass the idea on to you.

Resurrection Eggs strike me as being an Easter version of the Jesse Tree or Advent Calendar, with items describing the events of Holy Week and Easter packed in plastic eggs which are opened in preparation for the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. You can begin with a discarded egg carton and a dozen plastic eggs from the dollar store and fill them with the items suggested, such as palm, a little toy colt or donkey, purple cloth, nails, etc. The capsules from inside Kinder Eggs will also work, and you may find items in Lego, Playmobil or other toy sets which are appropriately sized to fit inside your eggs. You may wish to invite student to suggest which items should be included.

Here are some sites with further information.

<https://www.thissimplehome.com/2012/03/homemade-resurrection-eggs-printable.html>

<https://savingdollarsandsense.com/homemade-resurrection-eggs-printables/>

<http://playeatgrow.com/2012/03/play-and-grow-homemade-resurrection.html/>

Thursday, March 28, 2019

Mary Ellen Chown and Joanne Montague will explore the biblical image of ourselves as “earthen vessels” who can pour out God’s love in our Catholic schools

Thursday, April 25, 2019

Adriana Rerecich, chaplain at St Thomas Aquinas CSS will explore with us the trends which are influencing change in the Catholic Church

Friday, May 3, 5:00 pm –
Saturday May 4; 3:30 pm

Our annual overnight retreat for HCDSB staff
The speaker is Dr Murray Watson

Please check the Adult Faith Formation Program booklet for further details. You are asked to register on StaffNet Event Registration for these events.



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With every blessing,

Gillian

System Chaplain and Faith Formation Lead