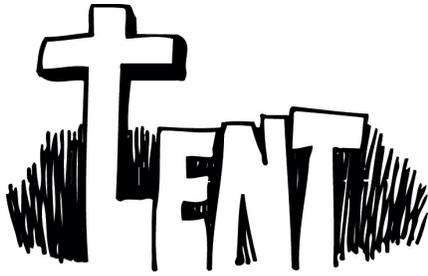


St. Louis College Ministry

Keeping you Connected to the Fam



Stewards of Time

Lent is beginning very soon with Ash Wednesday on February 10! As I type this, I am eating a large stash of Hershey kisses in preparation to fast from chocolate for 40 days— just kidding (about giving up chocolate!)

Many of us have grown up doing *something* special for Lent— giving up chocolate or tv, or maybe collecting spare change for a charity like the “Lenten Rice Bowl”. If you usually don’t do something special for Lent, I am going to ask you to consider doing something special this year. By putting some intentional thought into your faith practice, I believe you open yourself up to God and allow him to do important things in your heart.

On the balance check list, there is a line that says “Time to Pray and Attend Mass.” How are you doing with that? I’ve heard it say that people make time for the things that are important to them. I really believe that! But do we *stop* making time for things that *aren’t* important to us? How much time do we waste on stupid things rather than putting the time towards something productive or beneficial.

For you to have time to pray this Lent, some-

Balance Check List

- _____ Enough Sleep
- _____ Eating healthily
- _____ Exercising 3-4 times a week
- _____ Leisure & Rest
- _____ Studying Enough for Classes
- _____ Time to Pray & Attend Mass
- _____ Time for Fun & Friends
- _____ Service to Community

Happy February from CYM!

We will be praying for you all as you tough out the rest of winter and Lent begins!

-The CYM Office

things may have to go. That’s where the concept of fasting comes in. There are many different reasons why fasting is beneficial and one of them is this: fasting takes something out of your life so that another thing can take its place.

I’ve already shared that I “fast” from technology in my bed so that I can get more sleep or pray. I am currently “fasting” from Netflix shows so that I will spend more time on my grad school homework. Sometimes in the car, I “fast” from listening to music so that I can pray aloud (in private, where no one thinks I’m a crazy person).

A steward is one who is charged with taking care of someone or something. God has appointed man as stewards of the earth (Genesis 1:28-30). In Corinthians 4:1, St. Paul reminds us that we are stewards of the mysteries of God (the Gospel). Ephesians 5:15 and Colossians 4:5 remind us that we are also stewards of time, and St. Paul exhorts us to “make the most of every opportunity”. Are we good stewards of our time? Do we look at our time as a gift to serve God, to serve others, and to take care of ourselves?

Take some time to reflect on your time and your time management. We are all given 24 hours in a day, but how we use it is up to us. Where could we be more careful with our time in order that we may have more time with God?

If you’re in a relationship, maybe you could “fast” from hanging out after a certain time at night so that you can get more sleep or have time to pray before bed. Maybe you could “fast” from texting with your friends and call them instead. Calling usually gets the conversation to happen more quickly, plus you can be more productive on your homework without being sporadically interrupted by a conversation. Maybe you could fast from addictive games or shows, going out to eat late at night, or any other habit you have that is not particularly healthy for you.

To decide upon a time fast, you have to know what “filler” you desire. There’s no use in arbitrarily giving up greasy pizza if you’re just going to eat cheese puffs instead. What do you want to make room for this Lent?

Start thinking about your Lent!

So what is Lent?

The Catholic Church is into seasons. This is cool, because, apparently God is into seasons as well. Even in the most extreme climates of this earth, nature works in cycles: day and night, high and low tide, melting and freezing, birth and death. Lent is a 40 day long liturgical season of the Church and its name comes from a word meaning "Springtime". It is a time of spiritual preparation for the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ (Easter Triduum– whoohoo!) Lent is necessary, just like every season– Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer– is necessary. Something important is supposed to happen in our hearts.

40 days

In Scripture, the number 40 usually signifies a time of testing or preparation. If you do a study on the number 40, you'll see that MANY events happened in Scripture within the period of 40 days or years. Some notorious events you might remember are the 40 days Noah was aboard the ark during the flood, the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert after they were rescued from slavery in Egypt, or the 40 days Jesus was alone in the desert being tempted by the devil. The 40 days we spent during Lent are a time for us to get rid of the evil in our lives (like God did through the flood), prepare for the great promises God has made to us (as the Israelites did, wandering the desert), and strengthen ourselves by resisting temptation (as Jesus did, himself).



Why these three?

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are staples of a Christian life; yet, we tend to focus more explicitly upon them during Lent.

Instructions regarding prayer, fasting, and almsgiving can be found in Matthew 6:1-18.

Together, the three practices are fortification for you soul: "A three-ply cord is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

You don't have to "Lent" alone.

Go online and check out the different programs for Lent that are easily available to you. They are worth your investment of time!! St. Louis College Ministry will be focusing on **Lent: A Pilgrimage of Mercy**. Keep an eye out for blog posts!



^Lent Devotional Workbook for Women

<http://blessedishe.net/>

Lent App from FOCUS Missionaries >

<http://www.focus.org/lentsanity/>



^Daily Video Reflections to Your Email



Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

Make Mercy a SPORT

Saints—Pilgrimage—Opening Doors—Reconciliation—Tangible Works



The Christian Faith as a Pilgrimage

The first “pilgrimage” in which I participated was the 2008 World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia. Not bad, right? I was going to be a senior in high school and had never left the country before. Australia was a big first step.

I went to World Youth Day with members of St. Louis parish and we fundraised part of the cost of our travel. When we were explaining our pilgrimage to people, it was important for us to communicate that we were NOT just going on a vacation. A pilgrimage is a lot different.

Above is a picture from part of our walk in Sydney. It is one of the many pictures that symbolizes the true meaning of a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is much less about the destination and much more about the journey. For that reason, a pilgrimage is a great analogy for the Christian faith.

As Christians, we have a destination: heaven, unity with Christ, eternal life. Though heaven is a shared destination, we do not necessarily have a shared pathway. Yes, there are landmarks that seem to show up frequently on our journeys— role models, the sacraments, prayer experiences, Scripture, and even tragedies— yet no journey is exactly like the other.

Compare your story to your parents'. Compare your story to your best friend's. Compare your story to a saint's. I'm sure they are all unique... and they're supposed to be!

Why is it important to realize that we're all on a different path? We need to take the pressure off of others and off of ourselves to “be” at a certain place in our spiritual life. We only need to “be” alongside the Lord and in his presence. He will guide us; he will lead us. Your life doesn't need to look as holy as your friend's. You don't need to pray the same way as your friend prays. You don't need to be ashamed of your past. You don't need to feel inferior because you didn't have a thunderbolt and lightning conversion story.

Our journey is not yet over! Enjoy your pilgrimage with Him!

Lent: A Pilgrimage of Mercy

For the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis encouraged all of the faithful to take a pilgrimage, a journey. This pilgrimage doesn't necessarily have to be physical as long as it is one of the heart.

Lent is a pilgrimage of the heart. As I said on the second page, something important is supposed to happen in our hearts during Lent. Once we arrive at Easter, we are supposed to be different than when we began our pilgrimage on Ash Wednesday.

Because Lent leads us to the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, Lent is a pilgrimage of mercy. When we are participating in Lent by practicing prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we are *journeying towards mercy*.

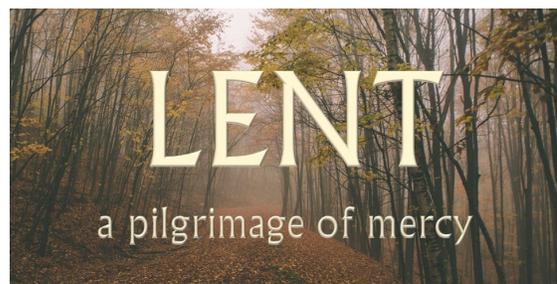
At the beginning of the Year of Mercy, I was really excited to start incorporating more Works of Mercy into my life. “Hm, what homeless people should I visit?” “In what soup kitchens could I serve?” “What faithless individual needs to be connected to God?” These would be good questions if they weren't completely pompous and prideful. I came to realize that before I focused on what mercy I could give others, I should reflect upon the mercy the Lord has shown me.

So, mercy. What is mercy? There are a lot of definitions floating around out there and one of my favorites is: Mercy is the pain one takes to relieve another's pain. When has the Lord suffered pain to relieve my own?

We don't have to stretch our minds very much to arrive at the Cross. A couple of years ago, I started watching The Passion on Good Friday. I don't recommend this to everyone because I don't think it's necessary to watch; however, I do think it's necessary for every Christian to spend time meditating on the Cross – the very instrument through which Jesus earned our salvation. THAT is the pain that Jesus took to relieve our pain.

What kind of pain do we have? Good question. It's important to be able to answer this. If we have nothing from which to be saved, in theory, we don't need a savior. So, again, what is our pain? I experience pain in strained family relationships, in feeling insecure about myself, in the violence I read about on the news. I think everyone experiences pain in our broken and fallen world. Though it has not yet been taken away from us, it will be. Jesus had died for our sins so that we do not need to. He has opened the gates of heaven.

Over the course of this Lent, focus on your journey to the Cross. Allow this Lent to be a Pilgrimage of Mercy!



**YOUR PARISH IS
PRAYING FOR YOU!**

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**REGIONAL EVENTS IF
YOU ARE HOME**

Every Wednesday but the last one: ChristLife Young Adult Meetings from 7-9pm in the Classroom at the Friary

Feb 20– 7-9pm– Frassati Night at St. Philip and James Church in Baltimore. Includes praise and worship, Adoration, a talk, Confession, and is followed by a Social.

Ash Wednesday Services at St. Louis: 7am, 12pm, and 7pm

A GOD OF DETAIL

When I was a sophomore in college, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Austria. I was in Austria during Lent and it was a very important time for my spiritual life.

So, when you're in Austria, you have to take advantage of the fact that you're in the Alps, right? Lent was later that year, so it was more Spring than Winter. For my Lenten practice, I decided that I wanted to spend one hour outside every day. If it rained, I could spend one hour indoors (either in my room or in the chapel) praying or doing some sort of spiritual reading.

When I was able to be outside, I did a variety of different things. Some days, I rode a bike around town. Others, I walked somewhere where there weren't a lot of people. I found cool places to sit and read or journal. About mid-Lent, I found a place that I liked especially and I claimed this place as "my spot". I spent many days sitting there, looking out at a small lake. When I was outside, alone, I felt very connected with God.



The more time I spent in nature, the more attentive I became to the little things: how the woods seemed to be layered with leaves, and trees, and plants; how there were actually small little insects and birds in places where I had assumed there were no animals; how the air became sweeter and more fragrant as Spring progressed. God

never neglects a single detail, even if I neglect to notice it. I was so in awe of his creativity, the finesse of nature, and his attention to the little things.

I often feel like my heart is a "little thing" in the eyes of God. Every once in a while, I'll be praying about something and stop to ask: "Is this completely trivial? Lord, I know there are people with bigger problems, there are natural disasters, there are wars— am I wasting your time with my petty problems and thoughts that are on my heart?" In other words, "Am I too little for you to care?"

I don't think that I am the only one who has ever felt this way. I am reminded by Scripture that God always has time for me and will always care for me: "Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?" (Matthew 6:26). Our hearts— though small in size— are important because it is from our hearts that we decide how we are going to impact the world. A small heart can have a very large impact. It says in Proverbs 4:23 "With closest custody, guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life."

Again, something important is supposed to happen in our hearts over Lent. We have to be able to bring our hearts to Jesus without feeling insecure, without feeling like our thoughts are petty, or that we are too little. He loves us and cherishes every moment that we spend speaking to him and listening to him. God is good! Bring your heart to him and let him change you this Lent.

With Love, Katie