

The first time I left the United States was as on a camping trip to Canada with my parents and my siblings. At the time, during the 1970s, the US Dollar was lower than the Canadian Dollar - so the exchange rate was not very good.

As we drove out toward the campground, further and further from the bustle of cities, we eventually had to stop for gas. It turned out that we hadn't changed enough money and I remember the owner of the gas station taking advantage of our predicament by charging us an unreasonable exchange rate.

But, we were far from any other gas stations, and we were out of gas.

Since those summer camping trips of my youth, I have had occasion to travel to many countries. And no matter how interesting and exciting travel may be - there is something very satisfying and comforting about returning home.

In the Second Reading, in his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul emphasizes that:

*our citizenship is in heaven*

This scripture passage is part of the burial rite used after a funeral.

But in this case, it is intended to point us beyond where we currently are to where we ultimately are going ... in this case HOME with the Trinity in our heavenly dwelling in eternity.

Lent is a wonderful opportunity to re-orient our minds and hearts on the things of our HOME ... not here in the world ... but in heaven.

We do this through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

PRAYER allows us to raise our minds to God and to contemplate the things of heaven. Too much may leave us overwhelmed, like the

disciples in the Gospel — who wake up to discover Jesus transfigured and speaking with Moses and Elijah.

But too little prayer leaves us preoccupied with the things of the world, living our lives as if we were “enemies of the cross of Christ” as St. Paul points out.

FASTING is a way to discipline our bodies so that we create an ‘empty space’ for God and the things of heaven. By denying our natural desires, we create a longing for those things which we can re-direct toward God.

But, again, moderation is needed.

Too much fasting can leave us grumpy, tired, or weak. Too little fasting may lead others to say about us that “their God is their stomach”.

ALMSGIVING is a way for us to separate ourselves from this world in preparation for an eternity in the next.

In all of our Lenten practices, we must seek a change of heart — not doing these things for their own sake ... but rather to draw us closer to God and our ultimate HOME with God in eternity.

As we approach the altar to receive the sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity - let us pray to better grasp our heavenly citizenship and cultivate a desire for our ultimate HOME ... eternity with the Trinity ... as children of God the Father, redeemed in Christ, and filled with the graces of the Holy Spirit.