



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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Dear Parish Family,

March 6, 2011

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. This is a day of fasting and abstinence. This is explained below.

LENTEN FAST AND ABSTINENCE GUIDELINES

FASTING is required of those between the ages of 18 and 59 on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday**. On days of fasting, one full meal and two smaller meals are permitted with **NO** eating between meals.

ABSTINENCE is required of all those 14 years and older on **ALL Fridays of Lent**, as well as on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday**. Abstinence means refraining from eating food items made of and/or from red meat (beef and pork), of animal fat, or poultry.

Masses on Ash Wednesday will be at the normal times of 9:00 am at Mt. St. Joseph and at 12:00 noon at St. Mary. In the evening at 7:00 pm at both parishes, there will be a Scripture service with the distribution of ashes.

Our Wednesday Lenten Soup Suppers will begin March 16 at 6:00 pm at St. Mary. The talks will begin at 6:30 pm on the Mass, it's history, structure, and spirituality. Guest speakers will include Bishop Cistone and Fr. Jim Bessert.

Stations of the Cross will be Fridays at Mt. St. Joseph at 7:00 pm, beginning March 11, the Friday after Ash Wednesday.

Coming up on Thursday, March 24 at St. Mary Church, Jim and Mary Cowan will be returning for a Lenten evening of prayer and praise. This will be their third visit to our parishes in the past twelve months. Come and be renewed in spirit!

Beginning this Tuesday, the Tuesday daily Mass at St. Mary will move from the morning to the evening at 8:00 pm. The hope is that those who wish to go to daily Mass but who work during the day will be able to attend. This is an excellent opportunity to enhance your prayer life during Lent.

As we begin Lent, please intercede in prayer for our parishes and for one another. We have many spiritual needs - so please pray! God bless you!

Fr. David

Guidelines for the Reception of Holy Communion

For Catholics

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

For our fellow Christians

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4). Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of communion by Christians of these Churches (canon 844 § 3).

For those not receiving Holy Communion

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

For non-Christians

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

Disposition to Receive Communion

The prerequisites for the reception of Holy Communion by Catholics are:

- 1) being in the state of grace,
- 2) having fasted for one hour
(for the sick 15 minutes if possible,
none if fasting is not possible), and
- 3) devotion and attention.

1. State of Grace.

As St. Paul notes in his letter to the Corinthians, reception after examining oneself is a prerequisite for worthy reception, otherwise Communion has the opposite from the desired effect of union with our Lord. This is why, out of respect for Christ and our own good, the Church obliges us to be in the state of grace when we receive.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

(1 Cor. 11:27-29)

2. Fasting for One Hour.

By ancient tradition, Christians abstain from profane food prior to receiving the sacred food of the Eucharist. Until the pontificate of Pope Pius XII the Eucharistic fast was from midnight. Pope Pius reduced it to three hours, and after Vatican II, Pope Paul VI reduced it to one hour.

The Eucharistic fast is before Holy Communion, not the Mass. It is a fast from food and drink, water is alright, as is medicine. Tradition teaches that to be food it must be:

- a) edible,
- b) taken by mouth, and
- c) swallowed.

In addition to breakfast, lunch and dinner, candies, breath mints, lozenges and anything that is put into the mouth to be dissolved or chewed meets these conditions once the dissolved contents are swallowed. Chewing gum not only breaks the fast when the flavor is swallowed, but it is disrespectful at the Sacred Liturgy. The tradition also teaches that the fast is strict — one hour, that is, 60 minutes. Given that until the 1970s, the fast was from midnight, this seems very little to ask of Catholics in the 21st century.

3. Devotion and Attention.

Given the infinite value of the Lord, it should be evident that we should receive Him with great devotion, attending to our reception of Him and not to other matters.

While this certainly applies first and foremost to belief in the Real Presence, it also applies to the practical application of that belief, how we receive Holy Communion. If we had the opportunity to have an intimate meeting with the President or the Pope we would not have our minds, hearts and attention wandering all over the place. How much less ought they to be when receiving Holy Communion. If it is disrespectful to the President or the Pope to ignore them while they are talking to us, how much more serious is it to ignore God when He is giving Himself to us!

Our interior disposition cannot be separated from our exterior disposition. If we go to Communion chatting with our neighbor, or with our hands in our pockets, we are unlikely to have sufficient devotion to receive. A casual posture and behavior bespeaks a casual interior attitude toward something that is holy and deserves our full attention, body and soul.

If we do not satisfy the first two conditions (the state of grace and the fast) we may not go to Communion. If we do not satisfy this third one, we ought not go to Communion, unless we correct it by stirring up our fervor. We would receive Our Lord vainly, if we lacked devotion and attention to Him. We could even receive Him sacrilegiously, if we acted as if Holy Communion were NOT the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. So, as a matter of morality, Catholics must pay attention to their interior and exterior disposition when going to Communion.

If our motive in receiving Holy Communion is the desire of increasing our love of God, we should recall the love which God has for us. This would consist in an attentive contemplation of how the Sovereign Lord of boundless power and majesty, was not satisfied with creating us to His own image and likeness, nor with the immolation of His only Son on the cross for us; gives His Son to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist to be our food and support in all our necessities.