

SAID ED February 26, 2017

Parish Retreat

Lent is an opportune time to prepare our hearts in a special way for our entering into the dying and rising of the Lord by reflecting on “the misunderstandings of forgiveness” and the “difficulties in prayer.”

One of the key ways we do this is by not only seeking forgiveness, but offering forgiveness to others who have hurt us. The problem is that we often misunderstand what forgiveness really means. For example, we may think that forgiveness is easy or that forgiveness is a feeling, or forgiveness means the same as reconciliation. C.S. Lewis states that “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.” Yet Gandhi invites us to see that “The weak can never forgive; it is an attribute of the strong.” Reinhold Niebuhr reminds us that “Forgiveness is the final form of love.” Finally, “forgiveness insures that evil does not have the last word.” In our parish gatherings this Monday, February 27 (10:00am in the living room and repeated at 7:00 pm in the church), we will explore together through scripture and real life stories the deeper meaning of forgiveness.

Another way we prepare our hearts during Lent is taking time for prayer. On Tuesday, February 28 (at 10:00 am and be repeated at 7:00 pm), we will discover that prayer is not so much our search for God, but God's search for us (“Where are you Adam?” Gen. 3:8-11). We will explore how our image of God affects our prayer: “We will become like the God we believe in” (“Their makers will be like them.” Psalm 115:8). We will look at how we make prayer a priority in our lives, knowing that Jesus so often spent time at prayer (Luke 6:12-14; 11: 1-13; 14:12 - 13; 22:39-46 and John 11:41-42). As Hilary Ottensmeyer states: “Until you are convinced that prayer is the best use of your time, you will not find time for prayer.” We will explore difficulties that we all face when we pray: dealing with distractions in our lives which have become so busy, and have so much coming at us day after day (living in a “culture of distractions”); understanding dryness, or God's absence or silence in our prayer with the guidance of St. John of the Cross and St. Mother Theresa; and being completely honest with God. We will look to scripture (especially the Psalms) and the great spiritual guides of our tradition to strengthen our prayer life. In our parish gatherings we will hopefully end up fulfilling the wonderful wisdom shared by the great spiritual writer Brother Lawrence: “Pray as you can, not as you can't”

Fr. Jim Hewes
