



Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Realizing Our Mission During the Lenten Journey of Renewal

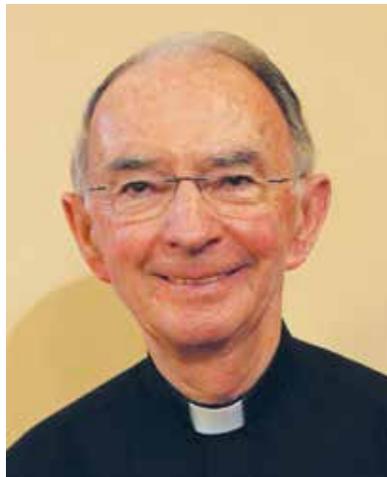
Dear Parishioners,

Lent comes early this year, so does the Sacred Triduum — Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord's Supper; Good Friday, and the Passion of Our Lord; Holy Saturday, the Vigil of Easter, the most important liturgy of the Church year, all leading to Easter Sunday. Without this connection, Lent has no context and all of our Lenten practices can be reduced to purely a human exercise.

Many people fast, many people make new spiritual resolutions, and of course, there are New Year's commitments that all of us make. While all of these are good, unless we connect Lent to its great conclusion, we may be in a mode of masochism rather than a deep spiritual renewal.

Wow! I've been preachy, but ignore that and try to capture the spirit of what I'm saying.

In our Faith Family of American Martyrs, we have many opportunities to live out the gift of the Lenten Season as we prepare for a fuller and deeper spiritual celebration of Easter. We have a three-day mission, "The Mass, Our Weekly Gathering"



with Msgr. Michael O'Grady, where we are invited to come together to learn, reflect and pray on the Mass. I hope by attending you will join me in prayer for loved ones who may be disconnected from this regular, yet beautiful practice of our faith.

We have the opportunity to support our youth as they work together to provide food and caring for the hungry. Yes, there are those in our own country who go to bed each night — if they have one — hungry. So thank you, teens, for

being an example and for providing another easy way for us to share.

Are you aware of "Dive-In?" It is a cooperative effort in our Deanery to bring together many different speakers. The various parishes act as hosts over a period of three weeks offering us time to get to know more about our faith as well as meeting some great people from our neighboring parishes. This is a perfect opportunity to "do something" for Lent.

Of course, at this time of the year we are asked to come together as the Church of Los Angeles and

LIVING LENT IN 2015

During the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert, Satan was constantly tempting Him. He preyed on Jesus' humanity, trying desperately to get Him to test God. Of course, we all know it didn't work. "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." (Mt 4:7)

Yet, the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert communicates an all-important truth to us. Jesus, the God-man, experienced everything we have and everything we ever will as human beings, except sin. Satan even tried to tempt Him, just as he tempts us every day. "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" (Mt 4:10)

We all find ourselves in situations where sinful things look appealing. We must stand firm in our faith and tell Satan

to "Get away," just as Jesus did. Only then will we truly experience the glory of the salvation Christ came to give. Lent offers us a particular time to reflect and repent to be ready to take part in the resurrection that we are preparing to celebrate. It is a time that we spend focused on strengthening our relationships with the Lord.

How can we do this? Get to know the Lord through prayer. Read the Scriptures often. St. Jerome tells us that ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ. Read it daily, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. It is, after all, the Word of God! Draw close to the Blessed Mother. She knows her Son better than any of us, and she is eager to bring us to Him. Join her at the cross, where she witnessed her most precious Son die for each one of us. Pray the Rosary — individually and

as a family. It is powerful prayer where we walk with Mary through Christ's life, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection.

Of course Church tradition tells us to fast and abstain from meat throughout the Lenten season. Catholics who are 14 years of age and older must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, February 18; Good Friday, April 3; as well as all of the Fridays. In addition, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 60 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is defined as eating one typical meal and two smaller meals, which together do not equal the larger meal.

The thinking behind these requirements is to help us spiritually prepare ourselves, just as Christ did, for the great event which won for us salvation — His Resurrection on Easter!

Youth Ministry student volunteers help load an SUV with donated items



LOAVES AND FISHES PROJECT

Turning Ordinary to Extraordinary

It can be amazing sometimes what we take for granted. Take a paper bag, for example. Most of us probably have a dozen shoved in a closet, languishing under the kitchen sink, or gathering dust in the trunk of a car. But for some families, a paper bag can mean the difference between going to bed hungry or smiling because you finally feel full.

This March, youth ministry students will be filling Trader Joe's bags with non-perishable food items to supplement the food pantry at St. Lawrence of Brindisi. This effort, called Loaves and Fishes, has become a yearly tradition at American Martyrs. Much like the passage it is named for, the project aims to take something simple and multiply it into something much bigger.

"We feed those who are hungry," explains Director of Youth Ministry Monica Leon. "We take what we're given and we do our best to multiply and share it with others."

Starting the first Sunday of Lent, youth ministry teens will announce the ongoing food drive at Mass and distribute empty Trader Joe's bags that will include a list of suggested non-perishable items for donation. Parishioners who want to help can take a bag home, fill it and bring it back to church any of the remaining Sundays in Lent.

Once all of the food has been collected, the teens will then take the food to St. Lawrence to be distributed.

"In the past, it's been very successful to the point where we've had to take two or three trips each weekend with a Suburban full of food," Monica says. "Our entire Confirmation program's teens sign up to take shifts. We try to encourage our teens to live their faith through recognition of their gifts and how they can share them with others."

For the kids who volunteer to help, Monica says the experience can hit home on a number of levels.

"We're told, first and foremost, to love the Lord your God and second to love your neighbor," she says. "They really do learn to love their neighbor. They understand the world is bigger than just them. Last year, to prepare them for this project, we had a night to explore the different service projects. We spend some time letting them know why we do what we do and who the food collection would benefit. They don't just sit and serve and get service hours for school; they actually get a deeper understanding of who is being served."

Teens who want to help out are encouraged to email Monica at mleon@americanmartyrs.org. While food items are needed most, Monica says parishioners have also donated gift cards or money in the past.

"We will accept whatever someone is willing to give," she says.

“WE AS A PARISH ARE SHARING OUR GIFTS!”

Dive-In University Series South

Here we are, two full months into 2015, having made our resolutions at the start of the new year. Perhaps we have already “taken stock” of where we stand with our resolutions and challenges to ourselves. And now, as we approach Lent, Msgr. John Barry has an important challenge for all of us to consider — going deeper in living a Scriptural spirituality.

“In many ways, we as Catholics are ‘afraid’ of the Bible because we want Scripture to be a part of our spiritual lives, but we don’t know how,” says Patti Williams, Director of Religious Education and staff liaison to the Faith Formation Commission. “Msgr. Barry’s talk is titled ‘Between the Comma and the Period — The Depth of a Scriptural Spirituality.’ I think he is

saying that Scripture needs to be deeper than the words on the page. How do we do that? How do we live a Scriptural spirituality that makes the words on the page come to life?”

Though he has spoken at other parishes in the past, this year Msgr. Barry will be the speaker at American Martyrs on March 4. His topic is one example of the subjects that will be covered by over twenty speakers on multiple parish campuses. Based off of the University Series from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Dive-In University Series South is a multi-parish, multi-generational series of dynamic lectures during Lent.

“American Martyrs was part of the inaugural team of parishes three years ago with University Series South, and

it has been very gratifying to see it grow,” Patti says. “This year, Dive-In is expanding to three weeks, which we are very excited about!”

The theme for this year’s Dive-In series from March 2 until March 19 is “Embracing God’s Love and Forgiveness.” The Jacob and Matthew Band will perform the Kick-Off Concert at St. Anthony of Padua in Gardena on Feb. 28 at 7:30 p.m.

“It is definitely a multi-generational event for adults and young adults, and some local Catholic high schools have their students come as part of their religion class,” Patti says. “One very well-known speaker for young adults is Mike Patin. His talk is titled ‘Selfies, Besties and God’ and will be at St. Joseph’s in Long Beach on March 16.”

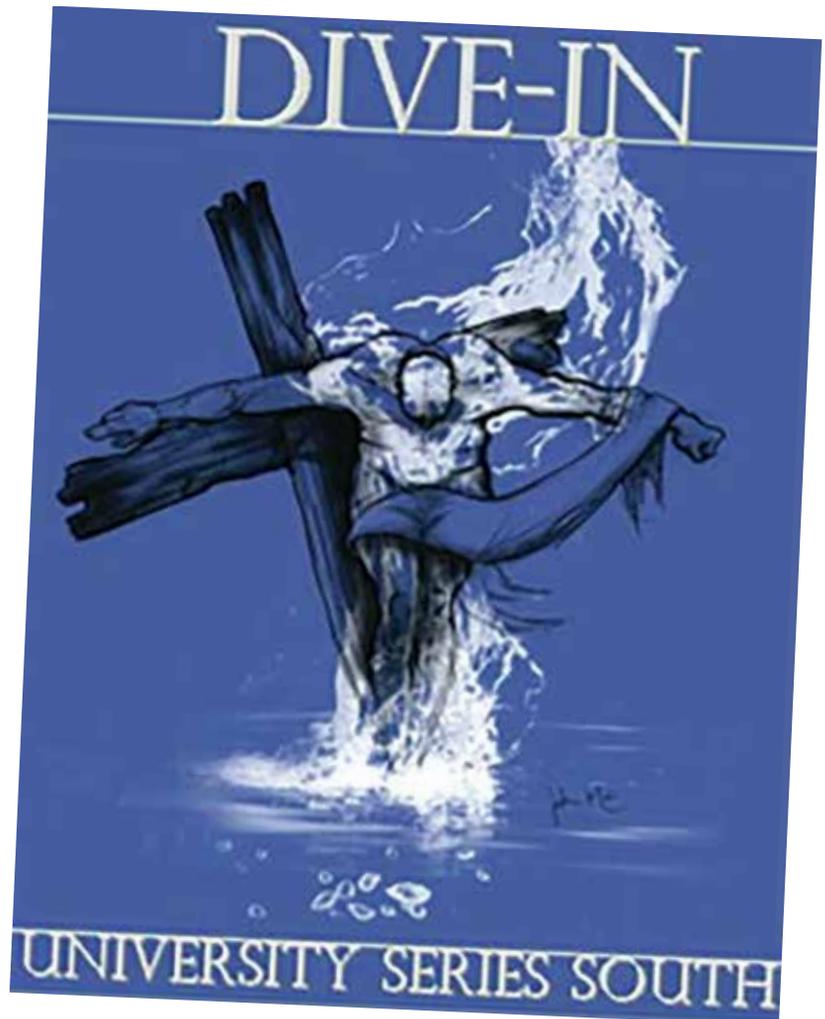


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This Lent, we have the opportunity to take advantage of a lively multi-parish evangelization series to go deeper in our faith while visiting and connecting with other parishes.

“Dive-In does involve visiting other parishes, but this is a good challenge because we as a parish are then sharing our gifts with other parishes,” Patti says. “We have such talent within all our parishes, and we are pooling our resources to offer opportunities to grow in our faith on multiple venues and multiple dates. Parishes will get to know each other better, and we will be able to offer more for our parishioners!”

For more information about Dive-In University Series South, please visit www.diveinuss.org or contact Patti Williams at pwilliams@americanmartyrs.org or 310-546-4734. The cost for each speaker is \$5 and can be paid at the door. Alternately, parishioners may buy a comprehensive \$25 pass at American Martyrs Parish Center or any of the host parishes.



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THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: *Returning to the Father*



Those of us who have children know what it's like when they come to us feeling sorry after they have done something they know is wrong. As parents, it melts our hearts. We can't help but forgive them freely and take them into our arms — sometimes squeezing them with tears in our eyes! At times, we may even feel closer to them than we did before the event occurred.

This, we can assume, is how God feels, being our most loving Father. In His generous love, He sent His only Son Jesus Christ to redeem the world, freeing it from the haunting grips of sin and death. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance through His Church to offer us forgiveness for the sins we have committed against God and our neighbor.

As St. Thomas Aquinas writes so beautifully, “[The Sacrament

of Penance is a] sacrament of healing and a sacrament of conversion, returning us to the Father after we have sinned.” The effects for the penitent, the sinner, include:

- Takes away all sins.
- Restores sinners to friendship with God.
- Reconciles the sinner with the Church.
- Gives the penitent graces to avoid future sin.

As far as the details for the reception of this sacrament are concerned, three conditions are necessary — contrition, or genuine sorrow for sin, with a purpose of amendment; confession of sins without any omission; and satisfaction by means of good works. Priests are gravely bound to keeping total

confidentiality for all confessions they hear.

Church law requires Catholics to confess mortal sins (the most serious kind of sins) to a priest at least once per year, and to confess them before ever receiving Holy Communion as well. However, this is by far the minimum; Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacrament freely and frequently since it is so extremely beneficial to the health of the mind, soul and spiritual life in general.

To honor the Sacraments is to honor God and the entire Christian community. To receive the Sacraments is to live in God's love and to strengthen our love for each other. Christ, the Paschal Lamb, is waiting for us, His beloved, to come to Him with all of our hearts.

REALIZING OUR MISSION *continued from front cover*

to support our financially challenged parishes and schools. Together in Mission is only as successful as our hearts responding. Here at American Martyrs, we are so grateful to all who have so generously said “yes.” I am proud of you and thank God for what you do.

I ask God to bless all of us in this Lenten Journey of Renewal. I pray for those among us who have put their faith aside, that God will remind them of the invitation coming to us during these days. “Come back to me with all your heart, don't let fear keep us apart. Long have I waited for your coming

home to me and living deeply our New Life.”

I pray that you and I will hear these words. God bless all of us during these Sacred days of Christian Penance and Renewal.

In Christ,

Rev. Msgr. John F. Barry, P.A.
Pastor

ARCHDIOCESE OF
**TOGETHER IN
 MISSION**
 LOS ANGELES

Blessed to Give, Grateful to Receive

As the name describes, ***Together in Mission***, the Los Angeles Annual Catholic Appeal, reminds us that we are “together in the mission” of spreading our Catholic Faith and caring for our Catholic brothers and sisters. Since 1993, Together in Mission has provided over \$300 million to the poorest parishes and schools in our Archdiocese.

“This campaign provides an opportunity to share our financial gifts in order to help provide Catholic education, ministry and a basic standard of service in the parishes and schools serving the less-fortunate.” – Together in Mission web site, 2014

“Together in Mission has offered my family a wonderful opportunity to give of our treasure,” says Jenny Attanasio, a parishioner over 20 years. “My husband Rico and I feel supporting Catholic education and helping those at other parishes and schools throughout the Diocese is one of the most important ways we choose to contribute each year.”

Recently during the 9:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Masses, Anthony Sciacca (“T” as he prefers to be called) of the Archdiocesan Office of Annual Appeal came with students and principals from Nativity School and St. Alphonsus School to personally thank Msgr. Barry and our parish community for giving to Together in Mission. Their stories were brief, yet touching.

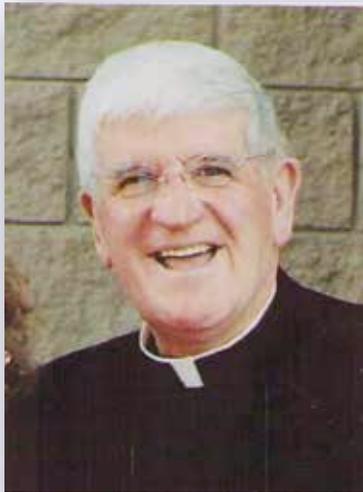
Jenny hopes that as the 2015 Together in Mission Annual Appeal begins this month others who have not yet donated will pray and choose to give something. “Our family is blessed to be able to give and it was beautiful hearing the stories from those who were grateful in receiving.”

To learn more about Together in Mission or to donate, go to <http://ourmissionla.org/>



Taken from 9:30 Mass LiveStream, January 4, 2015

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**PARISH MISSION
2015**

FEBRUARY 23-25

**“The Mass, Source and Summit of
Our Faith”
with Msgr. Mike O’Grady**

Our Faith in Action is provided by the American Martyrs Stewardship Commission

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. | **Saturday**, 8:00 a.m.

Holy Day, 5:00 p.m. (Vigil), 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.