



When this video reaches your inbox, we will be nearly three weeks into Lent. What a great time to reflect on the penances we are making. After my last video, several of you shared with me your appreciation for my story about not giving up coffee. It wasn't always clear if that's because you would find it difficult to give up coffee as well, or because you've spoken with my staff! Either way, I'm grateful for these and all your comments. And you'll be glad to know that instead, this Lent, I'm getting up earlier to pray, shifting my podcast listening and streaming service choices, praying Saint John Henry Newman's Stations of the Cross and refraining from eating the desserts that are I like most (unless I'm eating in someone else's home).

I've also been trying to see some of the physical pain that I'm enduring after weekly visits to a wound clinic for a stubborn incision as opportunities to unite myself more closely with the suffering Jesus. . You all know that there's some Polish blood running in my veins...and the Poles love Lent. You can go to Holy Cross to listen to the singing of the Bitter Lamentations, *Gorzkie Zale...*and I always give prominence in my office and home each Lent to Polish woodcarvings of the Pensive Christ, *Chrystus Frasobliwy*—bearing the cross of thorns, and having just been scourged. There's nothing like a good visual, whether it be the stations of the cross or the status to help us reflect on Christ's passion.

Of course, what is on my heart this month is how the Lord has already been moving in our lives this Lent. Many of you replied to me last month with your plans for fasting, prayer and almsgiving; some even mentioned participation in a small group. It's inspiring to hear the many ways in which you, the faithful, are making meaningful sacrifices for the Lord and one another. So this month, I'd like to ask you: What is the Lord revealing to you through these practices? How is your small group going? Are your kids doing well with their penances?

If your Lent is off to a rocky start or the Holy Spirit is tapping you on the shoulder about something, this may be a good time to do a quick review. Do we need to adjust somewhere? Do we need to redouble your efforts? I'm so grateful that we have a God who loves us and allows us to begin again and again. Our patron St. Paul likened a Christ-centered life to running a race – and that's a great way to think about our Lenten efforts as well: keeping a steady pace and keeping the faith. It's a marathon, not a sprint, and sometimes we need to stop for a quick water break and get back on the road.

This endurance will serve us well as we approach Holy Week at the end of this month. Once again, we'll gather for the Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, all culminating in the great celebration of Easter. This profound time of entering into the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection never gets old for me. With each liturgy, each moment of deep significance, the Lord reveals something new:

- On Holy Thursday, there's the washing of the feet, which turns our focus to service and hospitality towards one another.
- That same day, we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith, as well as the institution of the priesthood.

- All priests in the Archdiocese celebrate the institution of the priesthood by renewing their priestly promises at the annual Chrism Mass that also occurs on Holy Thursday. At that Mass, I'll bless the Holy Oils used throughout the Archdiocese for sacraments in the coming year, including Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, and other blessings.
- The next day, Good Friday, is the only day of the year when Holy Mass is not celebrated. Rather, the Blessed Sacrament--consecrated on Holy Thursday--is distributed to the faithful, and we venerate the cross by which the Lord suffered for our salvation.
- Then our sorrow turns to joy at the end of Holy Saturday as we celebrate the Easter Vigil, where the readings retell God's plan for salvation, and we welcome our OCIA candidates into the fullness of the faith – a tradition that stems from the early days of the Church.

I encourage you to attend as many Holy Week liturgies as you are able. It might not be easy, but the Lord is never outdone when it comes to generosity. I'm confident that you'll find your sacrifice well rewarded.

In the meantime, I invite you to connect with your parish and make a plan to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. Invite your entire family and your neighbors. My brother priests are eagerly awaiting your visit – either at one of the parish's regularly scheduled confession times, or at one of the many reconciliation services happening around the Archdiocese. These large gatherings of priests at parishes are a great way to come together with the entire community by starting with communal prayer, moving to an examination of conscience, then on to individual confession and absolution. These services are such a great way to experience God's infinite mercy with our sisters and brothers. If you see me at one of these, don't be afraid to come to my line! It's an honor to walk the road to forgiveness with you – in fact, it's one of my favorite things about being a priest.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers, and please know that you will be in mine as well. May the Lord bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.