

ST. THERESA'S CHURCH

ACCENDO

TO KINDLE, ILLUMINATE AND INFLAME



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A MESSAGE FROM FATHER JAMES

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are well underway in the second half of this liturgical and catechetical year. There are many projects and events that will be taking place in the next little while, especially regarding youth and young adult formation. We have also begun to see a continued and steady increase in the participation in different events of the parish. So, for example, the participation in daily mass has increased to a very noticeable degree. All these things are signs of great hope, and I am deeply grateful for them, as they show that the Spirit is continuing to draw people and to attract them to the good.

At the same time that these events, which are the continued effort to revitalize our parish, are taking place, we have also continued with our efforts of preparing our parish for the future. Some of these aspects are structural, others concern other areas of our parish life. Our firm goal as a parish family is to keep

our family living and alive, to transform it into a vibrant centre of Christian life within this area of Halifax.

Some of the challenges that we hope to tackle this coming year are the restoration of our main entrance, so that we may use the stairs again, and show those who are passing by that we are open, and active. Another aspect, and one that has only appeared in the last few weeks, is the leaking roof above our sacristy. We will do everything possible to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, and will, as soon as the snow and ice have melted away, look into possibilities of preventing a similar occurrence in the future.

Another area where we continue to work is the area of finances, in which we already have made a good progress. I want to thank the members of the finance council for their excellent work and their tireless effort, as well as I want to

thank all the parishioners for their generous and marvellous support. We will have some major projects for renovation, the stairs at the main entrance and the roof above the sacristy, and therefore we will also begin to look into possibilities of realizing these projects.

I would like to ask you, my sisters and brothers, to pray for our parish, so that we may continue to grow, so that we may continue to flourish in the midst of Halifax.

All these efforts are part of our effort to revitalize our parish in the areas of community, formation, and mission.

My dear sisters and brothers, I invoke God's blessing upon you, so that you may rejoice in His eternal love and mercy, and may see His transforming effect in your life!

Peace and all good

Fr. James+



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Message from Fr. James*
- *Catholic Spirituality*
- *Lent 2015*
- *Pope Francis' Message for Lent*

Catholic Spirituality: Nature of Spiritual Life

Dear sisters and brothers,

As we continue our reflection and series of articles on spirituality it is important to become aware of the nature of the spiritual life. Many authors in the past have seen, and described, the spiritual life as "spiritual combat". Christians have been called "*soldiers of Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3). This view of the Christian presupposes the existence of an actual combat, the fight between good and evil.

God stands for the Good, as He is the Good itself, whereas the enemy of God, Satan, can be called personified evil, or the absence of good. "*For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil.*"

For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good?" (St. Augustine of Hippo, in "Enchiridion")

This means that the spiritual life takes place in the midst of this battle. To be Good here means to become like God, to be evil means to become unlike God. This gives us an opportunity to look at our spiritual life with a slightly different outlook: Spiritual life is not a merely interior movement of adherence to God, the so called "orthodoxy" or right way of believing, but has to be expressed also in tangible and concrete reality. This so called "orthopraxy", or right way of acting, is expressed by how "like" God we act.

Here Christ is "The Example": He is perfect man and perfect God, which means that His acting is perfectly good. While we cannot imitate His miracles, which belong to His acting according to His Divinity, we can imitate his acting in His relationships with God, with others, and with Himself.

The liturgies of Lent, with their readings and prayers, are a beautiful teaching about this closeness to Christ. The whole New Testament, and especially the Gospel readings, are very useful to be used in meditation on our spiritual life: in belief and action. By allowing ourselves to know Christ better, we will also understand better who Christ is, and how we can become like Him. The battle then is to put this knowledge into practice, by loving God and our neighbour, by feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, by visiting the sick and those who are in prison. this process can be called a process of 'incarnation' in which our belief is put into practice in our day and age, in our circumstances, in our very lives. Let us live this 'incarnation', this becoming flesh of Christ in us, every day during Lent.

Fr. James+

God Is Good All The Time

Lent 2015

The Church in her wisdom every year gives us Lent as a time of conversion and renewal. Lent offers us all a very special opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and to deepen our commitment to a way of life, rooted in our baptism. In our busy world, Lent can become a time to reflect upon our patterns, to pray more deeply, experience sorrow for what we've done and failed to do, and to be generous to those in need.

We do this through the three pillars of Lent – Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving (Works of Love).

Prayer is the first pillar that becomes the foundation for the other two. The highest form of prayer is the Eucharist, so if you are able to attend daily Mass during the weeks of Lent this will bring much Grace to you and the world around you. It is also good to spend more time in personal prayer. This time can be as little as saying a decade of the Rosary for the needs of your family or the world. Our world is in such dire need of prayers these days. Perhaps you have time to drop by the Church and pray the Way of the Cross or this can be done at home.

Spiritual Fasting is the second pillar. People look at fasting as always being from food, but we can use these as a primer in self-discipline in order to fast from those things that will change our poor habits and draw us closer to God. Focusing on God allows us to hear Him more clearly. Fasting is never to be a public display of spirituality – it is between you and God alone. In fact, Jesus specifically instructed us in the Gospel of Matthew (6:16-18) to let our fasting be done privately and in humility, else we forfeit the benefits. Believers are taught to practice fasting with a cheerful attitude. Lastly, it should be understood, spiritual fasting is never for the purpose of punishing or harming the body.

The third pillar is almsgiving or doing works of love. It is tied closely with fasting. Whatever we give up, the money we save can be given to the needy. In a family with children it helps to make this a visual practice by, for example, having a jar or box in the center of the table as a reminder and measure of progress. Perhaps as a family you have decided to fast from desserts during the week (remember Sundays are not included in

Lent) and the money saved from those can be put in the box to be donated to the poor.

It is also considered almsgiving to give one's time and goods to those who are in need, i.e. donating time at Hope Cottage or the Basilica Outreach, giving clothes to charity, visiting the shut-ins, driving those without transportation and other similar practices. St. Vincent's Nursing Home is in need of volunteers at this time.

Pope Frances says, "Fasting makes sense if it really chips away at our security and, as a consequence, benefits someone else, if it helps us cultivate the style of the Good Samaritan, who bent down to his brother in need and took care of him."

During Lent do you think God needs the chocolate, candy, and other trivial things we give up? No He needs us to look deep within ourselves and reflect. He wants our hearts. In fact He wants us to stop our obsession with the ME and start thinking about what truly matters in life. Have a prayerful holy Lent.

We do this through the three pillars of Lent – Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving (Works of Love).



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Pope Francis' Message for Lent

Pope Francis' message for Lent 2015 has been released. His message which is based on the theme: "make firm your hearts" (Jas 5:8) invites Catholics around the world to consider our "globalization of indifference" as he states in his opening paragraphs of his message:

When the people of God are converted to his love, they find answers to the questions that history continually raises. One of the most urgent challenges which I would like to address in this Message is precisely the globalization of indifference.

Indifference to our neighbour and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience.

God is not indifferent to our world: he so loves it that he gave his Son for our salvation. In the Incarnation, in the earthly life, death, and resurrection of the son of God the gate between God and man, between heaven and earth, opens once for all. The Church is like the hand holding open this gate, thanks for her proclamation of God's word, her celebration of the sacraments and her witness of the faith which works through love (cf. Gal 5:6). But the world tends to withdraw into itself and shuts that door through which God comes into the world and the world comes to him. Hence the hand, which is the Church, must never be surprised if it is rejected, crushed and wounded.

God's people, then, need this interior renewal, lest we become indifferent and withdraw into ourselves.

A dog had followed his owner to school. His owner was a fourth grader at a public elementary school. However, when the bell rang, the dog sidled inside the building and made it all the way to the child's classroom before a teacher noticed and shoed him outside, closing the door behind him.

The dog sat down, whimpered and stared at the closed doors. Then God appeared beside the dog, patted his head, and said,



Don't feel bad fella'...they won't let ME in either'.

