

Fr. Walsh notes for February 22-28, 2010

As you might know, some members of the parish (I heard the number was 65) are participating in a Lenten Fast Marathon, a forty-day discipline of our five senses. We began by identifying two sacrifices for each of the five senses. Someone picked the sequence by which we will initiate each fast, beginning with Ash Wednesday and adding a fast every four days. The fasts are practiced cumulatively, so that by the end of Lent, we are performing all ten fasts. The only person who knows the sequence of the fasts is the project coordinator. The rest of us learn our new fast the day before it begins.

This is the first time I have participated in a project like this, and I am seeing some very positive benefits from it already. First, Lent does not begin cold turkey, but opens gradually, step by step intensifying the gift we are giving the Lord as we watch Him move closer and closer to His own suffering and the gift of His life for us. This is a wise manner of approaching Lent. My Mom would often warn us, when we were young, to be careful about what we “gave up” for Lent lest we get half way through it, and give up. Wise woman!

Second, there are ten gifts that we have chosen to give. Each fast is a gift He has given us, but which we are willing to set aside this Lent, for love of Him. Down the road (for me), this will include the sacrifice of chocolate. But not today. Today, the marathon is considering another area, not this one. Today, I am taking great delight in chocolate! Chocolate’s day will come though, and I look forward to that day when it too will become an expression of my love, since material and earthly things are not the most important realities in life; God is.

I am enjoying the way the sequence of fasts is unfolding. Some of my favorite things are on the list of ten fasts, but they haven’t been chosen yet! I think this is a hoot. It has brought some anticipation and joy into the fasting. And that too is important. Fasting is prayer and prayer is a gift of love. Prayer is supposed to cause spiritual joy. If fasting creates gloom, something is wrong. Didn’t the Lord Jesus tell us not to walk about gloomy and downcast in the midst of our fast?

A special thanks to the organizer of this Lenten Marathon, and to the parishioners who are sharing in it. It’s a race to the finish line, not against one another, but against any love we have in this world that is greater than our love for the Lord. If we make this run successfully, we will know victory in love for Christ. That is the goal of a holy Lent.