

Father O'Connor's Homily for 11 February 2024
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – B

Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46
1 Corinthians 10: 31-11: 1
Mark 1: 40-45

This weekend is our Annual Catholic Charities In-Pew Appeal. As important as this is, I did not want the opportunity to slip by to pave the way for the season Lent, which is just around the corner.

So here are few thoughts so that we can get Lent off to a great start together.

The season of Lent opens on Ash Wednesday this week, 14 February. While not a holyday of obligation, I encourage you to start this season with Mass. You will find the schedule of Masses and Lenten activities in the bulletin this weekend.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting for everyone between the ages of 18 and 59. This means one full meal and two smaller meals, and no snacking on solids in between. However liquids are permitted.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and all the Fridays of Lent are days of abstaining from meat for everyone 14 years old, and on up. There is no cap for this obligation. Another way to put it is that abstaining from meat applies to everyone from 14 to 114 years of age. That should cover the gamut.

We are also encouraged to do voluntary penance during the season of Lent. Classic practices are prayer, fasting and almsgiving [Ash Wednesday Gospel: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18]. I encourage you to do something in each of these three categories.

Perhaps in the realm of prayer, you might consider adding some prayer practice that would serve you well in your spiritual life. Lent is a wonderful time to re-establish coming to Mass every Sunday. Maybe even bolstering up the prayer practices that are already an established part of your life “with a little more heart” would be beneficial.

Fasting may involve food, drink, entertainment or fasting from a particular pet-sin that plagues us: like pornography, gossiping, griping, grudges.... Pope Francis recommends fasting from social media, or at least

curbing the time spent on social media each day. And then using that time more beneficially.

And almsgiving: remembering those in need who can use our assistance. Our Catholic Charities Annual Appeal is a great means for coming to the aid of others and being a vehicle of God's blessings to them.

These days leading up to Ash Wednesday are graced opportunities to decide "what I am going to do for Lent this year that, with God's grace, will make me a better disciple of Jesus?"

I hope that, for each of us, this will be the best Lent that we have ever spent. It will be, if we open our lives to God's "transforming love" and to the opportunities before us each day, from Ash Wednesday [14 February] until Easter Sunday [31 March] – and beyond.

Happy Lent, everyone!