



The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist
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The Rev. Thomas M. White, Rector

Lent 2019

Dear St. John the Baptist Family,

For me the first sign of spring is not the blooming snowdrops or crocus, but the lengthening daylight. It's no longer dark at 5 p.m.! Lent, the season upon which we soon will embark, gets its name from an Old English word for "spring," which is derived from the German word "lang," meaning "long," as during the season of Lent the days become longer. It is the increasing light that brings the spring flowers into bloom. What a great metaphor for Lent's purpose and goal. Lent bids us to renew our souls, through repentance and charitable deeds, with prayer and fasting, in order to prepare ourselves spiritually to celebrate anew God's Light, Christ Jesus, as he shines from Easter's empty tomb, proving himself to be the Light no darkness can overcome!

Lent consists of forty days (Sundays are not included) in remembrance that Moses fasted on Mount Sinai for forty days in order to prepare himself to receive God's sacred gift of the Ten Commandments. Also, we remember Jesus in the wilderness for forty days, fasting and being tempted by Satan, in preparation for his divine mission and ministry of redeeming the world. Just as the light of the sun brings life to the natural world, so the Light of God's Son brings us life, not for just a season, but for eternity!

While God calls us to a daily repentance, 365 days a year, repentance is a central theme and focus of Lent. Repentance, though, is more than heartfelt regret and contrition for the sins we've committed against God and our neighbor, confessing them, and then hearing the wondrous Good News that they are forgiven and cleansed away by God's grace. Repentance means, also, to turn ourselves around, reorienting our life...from self-centered to God-centered, turning away from what we say and do that grieves the heart of God and toward that which pleases the Lord.

Lent begins with the solemn day of **Ash Wednesday**, next **Wednesday, March 6**. **Two Masses**, both with the imposition of ashes, will be celebrated, at **12 Noon and 7 PM**. Two booklets with daily Scripture readings, meditations, and prayers for Lent will be given to you beginning this Sunday, March 3. The first, "Lenten Meditations, 2019," has been prepared by Episcopal Relief and Development. The second is entitled, "Lasting Hope," with the daily devotions each week focusing on the appointed psalms for Ash Wednesday, the Sundays in Lent, and Holy Week.

Our St. John the Baptist "Mardi Gras," one last celebration of feast and festival before Lent begins, will take place on **Tuesday, March 5,** Shrove Tuesday, with our traditional and delicious **Pancake Dinner served between 5 and 7 PM.** This is a dinner not to be missed! Please plan to attend.

Be sure to read **Deacon Paula's Lenten letter,** which is **attached.** It includes concrete examples of how we can embody the Lenten disciplines of self-denial and charitable acts, including our emphasis this Lent of "paying it forward" with random acts of kindness through our Circle of Kindness initiative. Exciting!

The "**Women in the Bible**" study continues to be well attended. It **meets the second and fourth Thursdays each month; in March, the 14th and 28th,** beginning with **dinner at 5:30,** the study with **great insights, learnings, and discussion at 6,** and **concluding at 7.**

In closing I pray Lent will be for us a season of springtime for our souls as God's Light increases in our hearts and faith, bringing us abundant life, now and forever.

In Christ's love,
Fr. Tom+