

LENT AND HOLY WEEK

The very early celebration of Easter in this year's cycle has drawn us quickly out of the center of a very wicked winter into the hope for Spring. Each year at the beginning of the "Lenten Spring" the Holy Father shares a message. I would like to share with you parts of the introduction to that message from Pope Benedict.



Each year, Lent offers us a providential opportunity to deepen the meaning and value of our Christian lives, and it stimulates us to rediscover the mercy of God so that we, in turn, become more merciful toward our brothers and sisters. In the Lenten period, the Church makes it her duty to propose some specific tasks that accompany the faithful concretely in this process of interior renewal: these are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. For this year's Lenten Message, I wish to spend some time reflecting on the practice of almsgiving, which represents a specific way to assist those in need and, at the same time, an exercise in self-denial to free us from attachment to worldly goods.If, in accomplishing a good deed, we do not have as our goal God's glory and the real well being of our brothers and sisters, looking rather for a return of personal interest or simply of applause, we place ourselves outside of the Gospel vision.

Lent is a journey toward a deeper Gospel vision. As we draw closer to the celebration of the mystery of the cross in Holy Week, we hope that our eyes are open to more faithful Gospel living. We live only for God's glory. Easter is more than our hope of eternal life. It is the manifestation of the awesome glory of the work of God. All things come to life; all things come to light; all things come to love. We are set free from selfishness and sin, not because it makes us better or more faithful, but God's love and glory are revealed in the new world of love and service. This is Easter glory and Easter life.

SETTLEMENT REPORT

The generous response of so many who have helped has drawn St. Mary's parish into a hope filled future. Our pro-rata share of the settlement was \$611,286. From your contributions and from parish funds we have funded **\$478,845**. The Finance Council will look at a proposed budget which will seek to fund our remaining balance of **\$132,441** in the next five years. Thank you to all who have prayed for the success of this effort.

WORSHIP SPACE UPDATE

The Epiphany Sunday exercise of seeking comments about care for our Worship Space was most interesting. My friends, to be clear we are not embarking on some kind of capital program. Call to mind what we did for the upkeep of the gym last summer. It is this kind of update which we need to be about. And in summary what did we learn? 1. We will continue efforts to study and improve the sound system. Best first step would be to fix the pastor! 2. We will do some easy handicap accessibility issues..... parking, commode, etc. 3. There is some hope that we can do a simple remodel of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel which will link it better to the Worship space maybe via a window. 4. We will try to provide some storage for the music ministry and make the music space a bit more tidy. 5. We will continue to explore some needed painting and lighting for the sake of a brighter interior. Some of these things are easy and will happen soon. Others may take a year or so. Outside we are challenged by the damage caused to the sidewalk by the tree roots. For safety sake we will have to do something about that. You will hear more before we move ahead. Thank you to the task force for collecting the ideas and input of the community.

Fr. John