



Liturgical Seasoning

FAITH FORMATION INFORMATION SHEET

LENT/EASTER 2010

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Casting Stones

Paying It Forward & Recognizing the Gifts We've Been Given

The Season of Lent is time for a personal spiritual revival of sorts culminating into three major practices: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Just as Jesus went into the wilderness or desert in the Gospel reading for our first Sunday of Lent, we enter a personal desert, fasting from the frills of life so that we can concentrate on what truly matters - where we are in our relationship with the Lord. It takes time to completely examine our conscience and discover exactly what keeps us from doing what God desires of us. It's difficult at best to focus on this pursuit when we are busy with the world, distracted by our ever-increasing technology, perceived need to watch our favorite programs or listen to hoards of music, and other activities that do not really improve our spirituality. During Lent, we try to focus on our actual needs, give up that which we don't need for awhile, so that we have time (or more time) to spend with Jesus and truly deepen our relationship with Him. As Paul says in Philippians 3:8-14 (5th Sunday of Lent), "For his [Christ's] sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ." As M. Scott Peck states in his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, practicing the discipline of delayed gratification can result in many blessings. Our Lenten practices points to the main blessing that Paul does, that we "may attain the resurrection from the dead," (Phil 3:11).

The trick is knowing how to deepen our relationship with Jesus and how to repay God who needs

nothing of what we can ever possibly give. Jesus and his disciples, as well as our saints provide us with ideas of how to know Christ better and be more like Him. Micah 6:6-8 states that "You have been told, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." Paul says in Romans 12:17, "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor...serve the Lord." Matthew 25 tells exactly how to love and serve the Lord in the infamous passage where the sheep are praised for serving Him by addressing the needs of those around them; and the goats are chastised for not doing this. The reward ~ eternal life with God. The punishment ~ eternal fire of the

devil. These are all very powerful words that invoke study of our own hearts as to whether we are doing enough to remain inherited citizens of heaven as opposed to worshipping idols of our desires. While we cannot earn our salvation, if we truly believe that the Lord is our God and Savior, our actions and words will emulate Jesus as much as we are able. We also must remember that when we fail, we should reconcile ourselves with the Lord.

The 2000 movie, *Pay It Forward*, is a great example of how to help others in a way that is self-sustaining. In response to a class assign-



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ment to explore and present ways that could make the world a better place, Trevor Mckinney comes up with the idea of repaying those who have help you by helping three other people when the opportunity presented itself. This is one pyramid scheme in which the benefits far out ways the costs and, like in the movie, can become and/or continue to be a movement that changes the world.

For those who may consider this assignment daunting, just remember that none of us are self-made, as secular society would have us believe. God made us and gave us family members, teachers, friends, and even strangers to raise and guide us, help us in our need, teach and train us, to love us. Sometimes we simply need to think about this intently and write down the times when we were helped by someone else. Then we can think about what Jesus did for us ~ becoming the sacrificed Lamb of God Who takes away our sins ~ the ultimate *pay it forward* of all time.

While we challenge all of you to practice this concept of *paying it forward*, we also will provide an area in the back of the church where you can write down what others have done for you and how you were touched and/or helped by this. To symbolize these deeds a stone will be placed in the baptismal fount for each item you write. Remember that Christ is our cornerstone, the one which the builders rejected but became the foundation of our Church. The stones symbolize the foundation that

we and others continue to build by lending assistance to others when the opportunity presented itself.

Many times we gain from that which we give. Being present with those who need us and the gifts we can offer helps us to realize how all are children of God. You may want to write down instances when, during this Season of Lent, you helped someone and how this may have affected your spiritual journey.

Once when I volunteered at a homeless shelter, I discovered that most of the people there were just like me except for a bit of extended hardship. But unlike me they trusted that God would provide everything that they needed. Their spirits were so beautiful, grateful for the chance to get back on their feet while living in a clean, dry communal place. They taught me about humility and serving God with joy and compassion. Their trust in the Lord far outpaced mine. I was impressed and gained so much more from them as if they were Jesus Himself in disguise.

Take some time to learn more about being the sheep serving the Good Shepherd this Lent.



How To PIF

Below is are basic steps of how to pay it forward.

1. Be attentive and ready for any opportunity in which you can help someone.
2. Try doing something for someone you don't know very well or at all with no motives of receiving anything back from this person.
3. If the person you've helped ask you what he/she can do in return, tell him/her to help three people when he/she can.
4. When you have noticed that someone has done something for you, pay it forward.
5. Read the Book: Pay It Forward, A Novel by Catherine Ryan Hyde (Simon & Schuster).

Warnings:

1. Be careful about your personal information when helping strangers in order to keep yourself and your family safe.
2. The person / people you help may not thank you or may even seem ungrateful. This can be due to a number of reasons. However, helping them usually affects them positively, eventually.
3. Continue to provide for the needs of yourself and your family. The stronger you are and remain, the easier it will be to continue to help others. If you have a family, your responsibility still lies in supporting them as well.

~ Compiled by
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References:

Pay It Forward ~ Description of the movie from imdb.com
How to Pay It Forward from wiki-How.com