

Dear Friends,

I pray your lent is progressing well as we begin this fourth week. This Sunday is Laetare Sunday. Its name is derived from the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice Jerusalem..." and it marks that we are over halfway through this season of penance and purification. On this Sunday, the priest wears rose to signify the joy of the Church that is on pilgrimage to the Promised Land, longing to arrive at the celebration of Easter and ultimately to the Heavenly Jerusalem.

During the Third Week of Lent each year, I enjoy reflecting on one of the readings that the Church gives us in the breviary for the Office of Readings from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologous who was Bishop of Ravenna from the year 433 until his death in 450. He is a Doctor of the Church and known as the "Doctor of Homilies" for being such a great preacher.

St. Peter gives us a concise summary of why the Church urges us to pray, fast, and practice works of mercy during lent.

*There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting, and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy, and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.*

*Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So, if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others, you open God's ear to yourself.*

*When you fast, if your mercy is thin, your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others.*

As Jesus taught in Luke 6:38, "Give and it will be given back to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Lent is a time to adjust the measure of our mercy. Through prayer and fasting, God wants to stretch our love. He wants to inspire us to give of ourselves. St. Teresa of Calcutta practiced this by recognizing Jesus in each of the little ones she encountered remembering Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom in St. Matthew's Gospel when He said, "Whenever you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me." In each of our daily interactions may we always remember that it is Jesus we are encountering and serving.

This week, as Pé Josue and Fr. Frank visit us from Haiti, we have the opportunity to stretch our love and to give generously to our brothers and sisters at Ste. Anne. Our dinner is Saturday, March 30, and then we will have the opportunity to give at each of the Masses or, if you so choose, you can check in online and give a one time or recurring gift to help us support the children of Ste. Anne School. Each year as we visit, I count myself blessed to see the fruit borne by your generosity. Thank you for your continued support of our sister parish, Ste. Anne.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Jack D. Shrum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Jack D. Shrum  
**Pastor**