

The Good News of St. Matthew's Parish

St. Matthew's Catholic Church*400 Sunset Rd.

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Our Special Lenten Issue



St. Matthew Parish was first known as *'Holy Apostles Mission'*, an outreach of St. Patrick Cathedral. The first mass was held in the Fire Station. Each Sunday morning parishioners had to push the fire truck out of the fire house, go to Cathedral, load up chairs and all sacred vessels, set up for mass and after mass, while enjoying coffee and doughnuts, load up and make the return trip to Cathedral. In 1953, Mr. and Mrs. Arturo Ortiz, Sr. offered the use of an air-cooled room in their cotton brokerage office for mass where furnishings did not have to be moved each Sunday. This was the first semi-permanent home for the community of Holy Apostles. In September, 1953, the Diocese purchased property at 4647 Emory. Col. Chester Rowland, father of Fr. Roland, made all the sanctuary furniture. Bishop Harold Henry, friend of the Rowland family from Columbia, blessed the chapel. Eileen Blake, wife of Robert Blake, the Baptist agent through whom the Emory property was purchased, made all the vestments. Tom Love, owner of the local baseball team, the El Paso Texans, became involved and put together a choir.

Between 1956 and 1961, the property on Emory was sold and the present seven acres on Sunset belonging to Arturo and Maureen Ortiz became the home of Holy Apostles, newly named St. Matthew Parish. Fr. James Payne was the first official pastor and under his leadership the original church and parish hall were built with the understanding that a school would soon be constructed. The first mass in St. Matthew church was celebrated by Fr. Payne on Easter Sunday, 1960. St. Matthew Parish is now under the direction of Msgr. David Fierro and continues to serve the spiritual needs of El Paso's Upper Valley and West Side.

Please contact the parish office (915) 584-3461 for more information.

What is Lent?

Lent (Latin: Quadragesima) is a solemn observance in the liturgical year of many Christian denominations, lasting for a period of approximately six weeks leading up to Easter Sunday. In the general Latin-rite and most Western denominations Lent is taken to run from Ash Wednesday to Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday) morning or to Easter Eve. In the Catholic Church, Lent lasts until Holy Thursday, while other denominations run until Easter Eve. The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer—through prayer, penance, repentance, almsgiving, and self-denial. Its institutional purpose is heightened in the annual commemoration of Holy Week, marking the death and resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the events of the Bible when Jesus is crucified on Good Friday, which then culminates in the celebration on Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

During Lent, many of the faithful commit to fasting or giving up certain types of luxuries as a form of penitence. The Stations of the Cross, a devotional commemoration of Christ's carrying the Cross and of his execution, are often observed. Many Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches remove flowers from their altars, while crucifixes, religious statues, and other elaborate religious symbols are often veiled in violet fabrics in solemn observance of the event. In certain pious Catholic countries, some adherents mark the season with the traditional abstention from the consumption of meat. In some countries, grand religious processions and cultural customs are observed, and the faithful attempt to visit seven churches during Holy Week in honor of Jesus Christ heading to Mount Calvary.

Lent is traditionally described as lasting for forty days, in commemoration of the forty days which, according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus spent fasting in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry, where he endured temptation by the Devil.[2][3] However, different Christian denominations calculate the forty days of Lent differently. In most Western traditions the Sundays are not counted as part of Lent; thus the period from Ash Wednesday until Easter consists of 40 days when the Sundays are excluded. However in the Roman Catholic Church Lent is now taken to end on Holy Thursday rather than Easter Eve, and hence lasts 38 days excluding Sundays, or 44 days in total.



Information provided by USACatholic.org

Lent Rules for Catholics

Fasting and Abstinence

The rules of Lent require every Catholic ages 18 to 59 to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. You may eat some food, but you must adhere to strict guidelines. One full meal may be eaten on Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday. Catholics also may eat two other, smaller meals on each of those days. However, the two meals combined may not equal or exceed the size of the full meal. You may not eat between meals on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday, but it is OK to drink liquids.

A rule on abstinence prohibits all Catholics who are at least 14 years old from eating any meat on Ash Wednesday and on every Lenten Friday. Catholics can bypass these rules if following them would threaten their health or affect their ability to work. Many Catholics choose an additional form of fasting or abstaining. They might give up eating candy or smoking cigarettes during Lent, for example.

Giving Alms

Another rule of Lent requires Catholics to show generosity to needy people, whether they are poor, aged, sick or suffering in some other way. Typically, Catholics are encouraged to give alms to charities. Many Catholic churches take up a second collection during Lent to raise extra money for charitable organizations. Catholics believe that giving alms and fasting are acts of self-denial and help them grow closer to Jesus Christ.

Praying

The third main rule of Lent for Catholics involves prayer. Catholics are encouraged to grow spiritually by devoting more time to individual and family prayer, reciting the Rosary, reading from the Bible and studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which details the church's beliefs. Catholic leaders often ask their followers to especially pray for world peace and an increase in the number of people choosing a religious vocation, such as the priesthood. Catholics also are urged to participate in the sacrament of Penance to confess their sins and repent. Individual churches may schedule additional times for Mass to make it easier for Catholics to attend a weekday service during Lent. Many churches also schedule special Friday Lenten services known as Stations of the Cross. This service recounts Jesus Christ's path to crucifixion and resurrection.



Why Giving Something Up for Lent Matters!

It's a common question: Why would you want to give something up for Lent when you could do something positive instead? After all, shouldn't Lent be a time of self-improvement? Shouldn't we pray more? Give more away? Be kinder, more patient, and more willing to forgive? Yes! Yes! and Yes! We should absolutely do all those things. But, giving something up for Lent still matters. The three traditional pillars of Lenten observance are prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. The three are intimately interconnected.

Prayer is conversation with God. It draws us into deeper relationship with God, and by extension, our neighbor. It allows us to focus on what matters, what God wants us to do, and to live a life of Christian love. Almsgiving calls us to be generous – to help those in need. It invites us to live with less and give out of love. What do we need? What can we live without? What are we attached to that could better be used by someone else? Which brings us to fasting. Traditionally, fasting meant having only water or, perhaps, bread and water. While some still practice such an extreme fast, the term has a looser interpretation today. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday those between the ages of 18 and 59 who are physically able to fast are asked to eat only one full meal and two smaller meals with no eating between meals.

What we tend to refer to as “fasting” from something in particular is more accurately termed “abstaining.” On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and all Fridays of Lent, Catholics over the age of 14 should abstain from meat. Nevertheless, whether you call it “fasting” or “abstaining,” giving something up you enjoy during the Lenten season has value. If you give up a specific food, the money you save not buying that food can be given to charity. If you give up an entertainment (television, computer, etc), you can use the time you save more wisely. You can spend it in quality time with your family or other people. Either way, your fasting directly leads to a greater love of neighbor. In addition, giving something up helps build spiritual character. Making sacrifices is hard. There are many times in life when we have to do things and avoid things we may not want to. Deliberately avoiding something for a greater purpose helps us develop discipline and mastery over our bodies and desires. While it might not make it easy to make those bigger sacrifices; it does help make it easier. Self-control in small things leads to self-control in larger things. This also helps us live a life more fully centered on love. This holy season, embrace the three aspects of Lenten observance. Pray, give generously, and sacrifice. By the time Easter comes, you will have become a better, more loving, person as a result.

By Carlos Rodriguez



Ministry Updates & Information

Hospitality Committee*

Knights of Columbus*

St. Vincent de Paul Society* St. Vincent de Paul operates three Thrift Stores located in; Canutillo at 6950 3rd Street...In El Paso at 2104 N. Piedras St., and in Montana Vista at 14523 Van Lane. Donations of food, clothing, and household items and furniture are welcomed. To arrange for the pick-up of items or bulk quantities call: 915/564-4357.

Men's ACTS*

Women's ACTS*

St. Matthew's Conference* has a conference help line: 915/545-4263. The Conference serves the area encompassed by postal zip codes 79922 and 79932. St. Luke's and Queen of Peace serve other areas in West El Paso. We also assist St. Patrick's in Canutillo, in the form of twinning, which is rendering aid to a sister conference that has financial needs beyond their resources.

Life Teen* Contact: Michael Hernandez at st Matthews Office



History of ACTS Movement

ACTS retreats have enriched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people; men and women, teens and retirees, rich and poor, Catholic and non-Catholic, in the United States as well as other countries. It has reinvigorated the spiritual lives of individuals, of families, of entire parishes. Yet, 25 years ago, it did not even exist. The way this wonderful program came to be is a beautiful blend of the Holy Spirit and those who listen to His words.

No history of ACTS would be complete without the help of, and some familiarity with, the Cursillo retreat. Cursillo began in Spain in the years between WWI and WWII, in response to what many in the church saw as the increasing secularization of many Catholics in Spain at the time. It was intended to be a short course (the Spanish for short course is "cursillo") on the Catholic faith, and soon became widely popular for its profound effect on people's spirituality. By the mid 1980's, it had spread to many places in the world, including Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Selma, Texas, a suburb of San Antonio. It was here that three men who were heavily involved in Cursillo planned the first ACTS retreat.

Ed Courtney, Joe Hayes, and Marty Sablik were instructors and coordinators with Cursillo, with years of Cursillo experience and a mutual friendship. They thought that several aspects of Cursillo could be improved in order to make the retreat more relevant to the needs of the parish, especially after the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. From the beginning, they all felt that it was important for the retreat to be open to everyone, not just to Catholics, and not just to those who were sponsored by someone. Ed, acting under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, met Joe and Marty at a coffee shop to build a new retreat called ACTS. This seemed logical to Ed since the Acts of the Apostles described what the apostles did, and are we not the apostles of today? Since the three main points in Cursillo were Piety, Study, and Action, Ed felt it absolutely necessary to bring them into ACTS. Once again under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Ed used a dictionary to help him correlate the letters A, C, T, and S into the themes of Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service. Joe Hayes, with the help of the Holy Spirit, was instrumental in securing the approval of both their pastor, Fr. Patrick Cronin, and that of Archbishop Flores. Another friend and parishioner, Wallace Vaughn, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to read Acts 2:42-47, the passage that became the biblical inspiration for the weekend.

People have credited ACTS with saving their lives, saving their marriages, convincing them to be ordained as priests or deacons, or leading them to the religious life, simply by opening their eyes and their hearts to God's word. Pastors have praised its positive effects on their parishes, leading to highly invigorated parish life. Bishops and other church leaders have called it the most important movement in the Catholic Church today; all this from a handful of faith-filled people with the courage and perseverance to be led by the Holy Spirit.

The Men's ACTS retreat will be March 14-17th. There is still plenty of room! For more information and an application, contact:

News, Information and Announcements

The Good News of St. Matthew's Newsletter is a quarterly publication. We encourage parishioners to submit articles, prayer requests, announcements and photos regarding any and all; Ministries, Events, and general information about St. Matthew's Parish. For more information contact: Carlos Rodriguez @ St Matthew Office