

Lent is the Road to Renewal

Great Lent is a time for searching one's heart, it is a testing of faith and a calling to deepen our devotion to Christ and His holy Church. We are called as a body of believers to take Lent seriously. Fasting, praying, attending services and works of charity are tools which aid us in the renewal of our baptisms and are expressions of an active faith in Christ. With a renewed faith and deepened devotion to Christ, His divine Will for each of us becomes clear. How am I to serve, what is my role, can I find peace, where is the love of God in today's world? Life's most important questions can be answered if we faithfully submit ourselves to venture upon the Lenten journey.

Lent is a time for us to face reality. The topic of accountability and judgment have never been very popular. The Church in its wisdom knows it as part of the reality of our situation. At every service we are reminded of the account we must all make before the judgment seat of Christ. The Bible is clear, we will be judged by what we have done and what we have failed to do. Did we love, and through that love were others led to the love of Christ? Did we help those in need, and through our assistance were others led to Christ as the helper of the helpless? Did we share our wealth, and through our generosity were others inspired and led to Christ Who shares the wealth and riches of His everlasting kingdom? These are check points that can serve to measure how well we have fared.

Great Lent reminds us that the goal of our fasting and praying is not focused on an isolated individual but on an individual who is part of the body of Christ and is linked and joined to others. The act of greeting one another during the Liturgy reminds us that we must be reconciled with one another before we can confess our faith in the holy Trinity. Lent is a time for us to realize the connections that exist between us by virtue of being members of the body of Christ.

The members of Assumption have always graciously responded when needs arise. My role as priest is not to accumulate funds in order to build a legacy of buildings erected in memory of our Egos. My role is to inspire hearts and souls to live more faithfully in Christ and to be moved to serve Him. I think at times the mission of the Church is compromised when its desire to build edifices supersedes the desire to change and convert hearts. It is the memory of the righteous that endures forever.

At this time, I am asking every family to prayerfully consider their role in making a one year pledge toward retiring our mortgage. Parishioners should not just check their accumulated wealth and see what can be given and not be missed. Prior to making the one year pledge, seek God's will. God calls upon hearts to do the extraordinary. The Church we all love and gather at as our heavenly home is the result of the faithful praying and seeking God's Will and responding sacrificially to Him. The church does not ask for equal gifts but equal sacrifice. Many parishioners are making changes in life-style in order to fulfill their pledges. Some forego eating out, morning coffee or have delayed

home purchases in order to participate in the Campaign. Consequently, many have experienced the great joy that comes from giving without expecting anything in return. God in His graciousness blesses us abundantly when we are being faithful to Him! In order to help inspire reasons for participating you should be made aware of the following.

The original \$ 800,000.00 mortgage was a seven year loan at 7.1% As of March 1, 2004 the mortgage has been reduced to a \$ 600,000.00 mortgage fixed at 6.3% and is due in full on December 15, 2008. Our monthly payments have been reduced from \$ 6,284.00 per month to \$ 4,403.00 per month. If we can pay off the mortgage by April of 2005, the savings in interest to the Church will be significant!

- Interest for the next year, from March 2004 to March 2005 equals \$ 37,358.00 Every additional year we take to pay down the principal adds approximately \$ 35,000.00 If we can pay off the mortgage in the next year and not draw payments out until December 2008, the church will save \$ 133,319.00 This is money that the church will lose if everyone does not participate in helping out.
- Assumption has a great need for a Sunday school building. Currently we have over one hundred children registered in Sunday school. We cannot move on to Phase II until we are debt free. The classrooms could also be utilized as our own Orthodox Christian Pre-school. Phase II also includes a Library, Bookstore, a Multi-purpose Fellowship Hall and Administrative offices. These are basic items for a church. As we have grown they are becoming more of a priority.
- Finally, if we are able to pay off the mortgage by April of 2005 our church can be consecrated. Metropolitan Anthony cannot consecrate a church unless it is debt free. Many times the founding members are never alive by the time the church they built was finally consecrated. This is a shame! It would be a bright light for the entire Church to see us being moved by God to make the consecration something our children and grandchildren can witness.

All of these inspiring reasons to participate have to do with the example we give to our children. They are the children of parents and grandparents that faithfully responded to God's call when the need arose. There has never been a time when the role of the Church in the life of our children has been so needed. The Super Bowl entertainment and commercials were clear indicators of how far our society has drifted from values and any sense of the holy.

I pray that our Lenten journey becomes a time of renewed faith and commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.