

**Dear Members of our Catholic Communities:**

**It seems that we have just got over Christmas, and already Lent is upon us. The forty days of Lent begin on Wednesday, February 14, Ash Wednesday (which is also St. Valentine's Day this year. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. Abstinence (no meat) starts at the age of 14. Fasting (having only one substantial meal per day). This obligation of fasting ends at the age of 60, but of course it is up to each person to decide whether to continue past that age or not. All Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence. For some, fasting and abstinence might be difficult due to health concerns, so of course there is no obligation if you fall into this category. Instead, you are encouraged to take on another form of penance. Ash Wednesday Masses are (St. Joseph's) 12:10 pm and 6 pm; (Spring Creek) 6 pm; (Wells) 6pm. Carlin and Eureka will receive their ashes on the First Sunday of Lent. Highland Manor will have ashes on Ash Wednesday at 2 pm.**

**During Lent, many of us will "give up" something as an act of penance. The following is just a suggestion.**

**Give up grumbling! Instead, "In everything give thanks." Constructive criticism is OK, but "moaning, groaning, and complaining" are not Christian disciplines. Give up 10 to 15 minutes in bed! Instead, use that time in prayer, Bible Study and personal devotion. Give up looking at other people's worst points. Instead concentrate on their best points. We all have faults. It is a lot easier to have people overlook our shortcomings when we overlook theirs first. Give up speaking unkindly. Instead, let your speech be generous and understanding. It costs so little to say something kind and uplifting. Why not check that sharp tongue at the door? Give up your hatred of anyone or anything! Instead, learn the discipline of love. "Love covers a multitude of sins." Give up your worries and anxieties! Instead, trust God with them. Anxiety is spending emotional energy we can do nothing about, like tomorrow! Live today and let God's grace be sufficient. Give up TV one evening a week! Instead, visit some lonely or sick person. There are those who are isolated by illness or age. Why isolate yourself in front of the screen?" Give someone a precious gift: your time! Give up buying anything but essentials for yourself! Instead, give the money to God. The money you would spend on the luxuries could help someone meet basic needs. We are called to be stewards of God riches, not just consumers. Give up judging by appearances and by the standard of the world! Instead, learn to give up yourself to God. There is only one who has the right to judge, Jesus Christ. (Craig Gates, "What to Give up for Lent")**

**God bless,  
Father Dan**