**March Chaplain’s Report**

***Does Jesus Know Us? Do We Know Him?***

Lent is in full swing! Meatless Fridays, Stations of the Cross, Fish Fries, any number of devotions direct our attention more intensely on various exercises to strengthen our spiritual lives. In the Church’s liturgy we see an interest shift happen somewhere midway through the Season of Lent. During the first half of the season of Lent, the gospel readings at Daily Mass help us reflect upon the basics of the Christian life. With the 4th Sunday of Lent (3/11/2018) the focus shifts more intently upon the reason for every season – Jesus Christ.

In seminary, I came across a book title has come back to my mind time and again. It was a question. Rather, it was two questions. *“Does Jesus Know Us? Do We Know Him?”*

Those questions lead us to one profound spiritual truth that can take a life time to unpack. Namely, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on flesh and came to dwell among us, love us, and die for us that we might have life and have it abundantly. St. John said it better – *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that man might not perish but might have eternal life”* (Jn 3:16). The way by which each man comes to know that Son is by way of a personal relationship.

Baptism and the Sacraments provide the doorway for us to enter into relationship with Jesus. They are the first part of our response to God’s loving invitation. But alone, they are not enough. We need to work to unpack and integrate the graces God gives us in those holy rites if they are to really impact our conscious lives. That integration happens primarily in Prayer and is then seen afterwards through our works of charity.

To help us see more clearly, that our life with God is always a response let’s listen to another word from John:

*“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he has loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins, Beloved if God so loved us, we must also love one another.”*

-1 John 4:11-12

Prayer also enables us to *“know God”* and give him the chance to get to *“know us.”* Prayer is key! And the Bible can be our guide.

Reading the Bible, beginning with the Gospels, let’s us come to know God, his Son and the Holy Spirit not just how we imagine them to be but as they are. As we open the Gospels, we’re confronted by a God loves man so much that he offers his only Son as savior and redeemer. We encounter a savior who is not some tame lamb but a lion; a dangerous man with a clear vision of the Truth for he is Truth. We meet a redeemer who isn’t afraid to offend or stunted by political correctness in his mission of redemption; flipping tables and calling out hypocrisy.

As Lent winds down, we can take the Church’s movement as our lead and begin integrating the Bible for the first time or for a second time into our spiritual lives. Begin with a Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke of John. Ultimately, wherever you begin – **begin**. Just as, however you pray, **pray**. If we want to know Jesus and make sure he knows us – we’ve got to give him the chance. If you need further encouragement – let’s end with a note from the Lord himself: *“Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you”* (Lk 11:9).

**Practical Tips:**

***1) Read a Gospel***

***2) Download a Bible App (Both are free)***

* ***Lighthouse Catholic Media App***.
* ***Laudate***

***3) Join a Bible Study***

Some parishes offer Bible Study groups for a fuller exposure to the scriptures as a group. At St. Robert’s two men’s groups exist on 2nd and 4th Tuesday nights (7:00PM) and Saturday mornings at (7:00AM). Men gather to pray and reflect on the coming Sunday’s Gospel

**Coming Up:**

***March***

* Stations of the Cross
  + This classic devotion enables us to walk with Jesus on the Way of the Cross and reflect upon his Passion as though we walked it with Him.
  + Celebrated every Friday in Lent at St. Robert’s at 7:00PM; See Mt. Carmel’s Bulletin for Times
  + Check the Knight of Columbus Website for Stations of the Cross book for personal use; entitled “The Way of the Cross” (booklet #363)
* Penance
  + Make time this Lent to avail yourself of this Sacrament of God’s mercy and love.
* Meatless Fridays and Fasting
  + As Catholics we have a serious obligation to abstain from meat on Fridays of Lent and on Good Friday to fast (one full meal and two smaller meals not equaling the full meal). The only ones exempt from that obligation are those outside the ages of 18-59 (so, 17 and under, 60 and up – not obliged to fast).
* Holy Week 2018
  + Palm Sunday – March 25, 2018
* Easter Triduum – March 28, 2018 – March 31, 2018
  + If you’ve never attended the full Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper, Good Friday and Easter Vigil) treat yourself this year to the Church’s built in “retreat.” These three days are the most sacred of the Church’s year and take us to the heart of the Christian Mystery. (**Disclaimer:** They’re long. But when we start griping about time with God, it usually says more about us than it does about Him.)