

"To Lead an Apostolic Community, Under Authority, That Brings People to Jesus Christ."

Bishop's Note: February 04, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Fasting

Perhaps it's because I'm halfway to 108, but time seems to speed up, rather than slow down, the older I get. This year Easter comes early, and so Lent comes very early - Ash Wednesday is in just one week away!

Over the next few weeks, I will be focusing on Spiritual Disciplines, both for the season of Lent, and for a lifetime with the Lord.

Spiritual Disciplines are those exercises/actions/habits that do not necessarily come to us naturally, but are designed to intentionally develop our relationship with the Lord. Richard Foster, in his book *Celebration of Disciplines*, says: "God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving His grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us.... They are God's means of grace." (Pg. 6)

As we enter into this Season of Lent - the forty days of preparation leading to Easter - won't you consider a new Spiritual Discipline? These are not simply designed for a forty day trial - simply to be abandoned on Easter - but for a transformed life with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

While there are a number of disciplines, over the next few weeks I'd like to focus on Fasting, Prayer, Service, Simplicity, Spiritual Direction, Solitude, and Reconciliation.

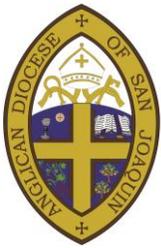
In the church there are traditional days of fasting, which include Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting can be defined in many ways including forgoing all food and drink for 24 hours, forgoing food but drinking water, or forgoing food during daylight hours and only having a very small and simple meal in the evening. You should be wise and discerning regarding your own physical requirements - for example, people with diabetes or hyperglycemia should not fast. For me personally, I like to fast with no food but drinking water on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and then on Fridays I'll fast during the daylight hours and have just a very simple meal in the evening.

So why fast? Fasting has a unique way of turning our eyes on God. In his book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard says: "Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food." (Pg 166) This is why fasting can be very significant when combined with intense or extended periods of prayer. Jesus demonstrates this spiritual discipline with his forty days of fasting while battling Satan in the desert, immediately following his baptism (Luke chapter 4).

As you fast, be sure to spend the time you'd normally sit down to a meal to sit down with the Lord for prayer.

I pray you all a Blessed Lent!

Bishop Menees



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Bishop's Note: February 11, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines – Daily Office

Yesterday we marked a special holy day in the church – Ash Wednesday. As we came forward, our clergy made the sign of the cross on our foreheads with the words: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” With these words, we were reminded of our mortality – a result of our fallen condition. However, we were also reminded that because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, his death and resurrection, we share with him in his victory over death, and we will enjoy him eternally in heaven.

As always, the question is: how should we live until we die or Christ comes again? This lent we will be exploring the spiritual disciplines as a means of preparing for our life with Jesus, both in this world and in the world to come.

This week I’d like to focus on the discipline of praying the Daily Office. Prior to the Reformation, praying the offices was the purview of disciplined clergy and of religious communities. Archbishop Cranmer desired to introduce this discipline to all people - lay and clergy alike - and in doing so, teach people both to pray and to read the Holy Scriptures. What a revolutionary idea, and what fruit this revolution has born!

The Daily Offices - known as Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline - are made up of Canticles, Psalms, Scripture lessons, the Apostles Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, Intercessory Prayers, and Prayers for Mission. While this may sound daunting at first, it generally takes about 15 minutes when you first start doing it, and can lead to a half hour or so once you are prepared to really spend time with the Lord.

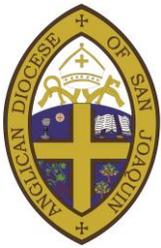
There are wonderful resources on the Internet that will lead you through the services. I recommend Mission Saint Clare at <http://www.missionstclare.com>

If you are using your prayer book and need some guidance, I encourage you to sit down with your clergy and allow them to instruct you.

The benefits of praying the Daily Offices are manifold: spending time in prayer with the Lord, learning the scriptures, and regularly praying for others all help to mold and shape us, and lead us to greater maturity in the Lord! The discipline of praying the offices has been a part of my daily routine - and that of my family - for my entire adult life. If, for whatever reason, I am unable to pray the office, I feel something lacking in my day.

A blessed Lent to you all!

Bishop Menees



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Bishop's Note: February 18, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Secret Service

Last Wednesday, the faithful throughout the diocese gathered in our churches for the haunting and beautiful liturgy known as Ash Wednesday. In that service, the Gospel lesson was from Matthew chapter six and we read these words:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-4)

One of the marks of a Christian is humility. The virtue of humility is not something that is valued much in our "Selfie" culture, where we are encouraged to document every aspect of our lives and share them with the the world through social media. Perhaps my age is showing, but I'm don't understand the need for the world to know what I'm having for lunch. This kind of narcissism, which is lauded in society, runs counter to the Kingdom values of humility and secret service.

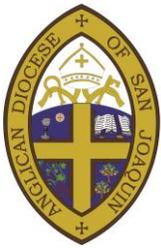
In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter six, Jesus expressly warns us that we are not to make people aware of our works of charity and love: “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.”

This Lent we are looking at the Spiritual Disciplines in my Bishop's Note, and one of those disciplines is to serve others in secret. We are, indeed, to give to the needy and to love and care for others, but we are to do so quietly and in such a manner that we do not draw attention to ourselves. This may be as simple as sending an anonymous note to a brother or sister in church saying how much you admire them and appreciate their service in church. Or perhaps God is calling you to volunteer with the church or another organization for a couple of hours a week, but not to make a big deal out of it or draw attention to yourself.

I see this in the Cathedral where a group of people volunteer to work with the after school program of New Spirit Academy, which is a Charter School on the Cathedral campus. These brothers and sisters quietly share the Gospel with boys and girls who would not otherwise hear the Good News of Jesus Christ that week, and these volunteers do so quietly and humbly.

The real benefit of our service comes from the joy of serving and not from the accolades of others. St. Francis had it right in his prayer:

"Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to

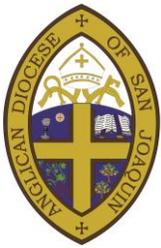


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understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." Amen.

I pray you all a very blessed Lent!

Bp. Eric



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Bishop's Note: February 25, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Self Denial & Simplicity

This Lent, as we continue to examine the traditional Spiritual Disciplines, I'd like to look at two related disciplines - Self-Denial & Simplicity.

Neither of these disciplines are in sync with our modern culture. In fact, the whole concept of denying the self or living simply seems to set you aside as a little nutty at worst, and at best simply too poor to live otherwise. Twenty nine years ago, when I began my ministry at the Church of the Epiphany in East Los Angeles, I consciously decided to go without a television. I'd lived many years without one and wanted to spend my free time reading rather than zoning out in front of the TV. A couple of months after I moved in, there came a knock at my door one early evening. When I opened the door, there were all these parishioners standing on the porch and in the front yard and in the midst of them was a large TV. It seemed that my parishioners - all immigrants and all living on very small incomes - thought it just awful that their "padrecito" couldn't afford a TV, and they pitched in over several weeks in order to buy me a large, color TV with remote control. Needless to say, I was very touched and honored that they had sacrificed for me and were concerned about me. But the concept of wanting to live without was as strange for these brothers and sisters as it is for so many of us.

You see, the spiritual disciplines of self-denial and simplicity is not because it is forced through economic circumstances but that it is a choice to live more simply in order to place more emphasis and concentration upon the Lord.

King David wrote it so eloquently in Psalm 62 vs 5-7:

“5. For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.

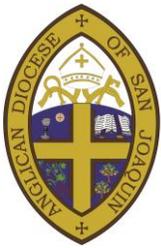
6. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

7. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.”

The spiritual disciplines of self-denial and simplicity help our soul to wait in silence for God, who is our hope, rock, salvation, fortress, and refuge!

As I write this Bishop's Note, I am at our mission in Henderson, Nevada. Jesus the Good Shepherd was able to move out of temporary space in a hotel ballroom to their own rented space in a light industrial park. The sanctuary is a large rectangular room that is beautifully appointed. The ceiling has been painted black, so that it simply disappears. The walls, up to about fifteen feet, are a warm yellow; the carpet is a dark sandy brown. Along the walls leading to the altar are icons of the saints, and it is almost as if everyone of them is pointing to the altar and the simple wooden cross above it with grape leaves carved into the beams. This is a very simple and direct space, yet, at the same time, warm and inviting. I love it! This space invites us to sit with the Lord and wait upon Him.

This Lent I would encourage you to consider the spiritual disciplines of self-denial and simplicity. Not because you have no other economic choice, but to live simply because, in living simply, you

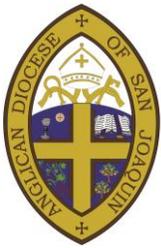


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want to live more closely with the Lord and less distracted by the sights, sounds, and cares of the world around us.

I pray you all a very Holy Lent!

Bishop Menees



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Bishop's Note: March 03, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Repentance

As we continue our examination of Spiritual Disciplines, I'd like to share with you something from one of the Church Fathers - St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople - on Repentance.

The Five Paths of Repentance of St. John Chrysostom (349-407) [emphasis added]:

"Shall I list the paths of repentance? There are certainly many of them, many and various, and all of them lead to heaven.

The first path is the path of condemnation of sins. As Isaiah says, Tell your sins, and you will be acquitted. And the Psalmist adds: I said "I will bear witness against myself before the Lord," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. So you, too must condemn the sins you have committed. Condemn them, and that condemnation will excuse you in front of the Lord, since whoever condemns the sins he has committed will be slower to commit them next time. Stir up your own conscience to be your accuser – so that when you come before the judgement-seat of the Lord no-one will rise up to accuse you.

This is the first path of repentance but the second is in no way inferior to it in excellence. It is to **forget the harm done to us by our enemies, to master our anger, to forgive the sins of those who are slaves together with us.** As much as we do this, so much will our own sins against the Lord be forgiven. So this is the second path to the expiation of our sins. As the Lord says, Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours.

Would you like to know the third path of repentance? **It is prayer: fervent prayer, sincere and focused prayer, prayer coming from the depths of the heart.**

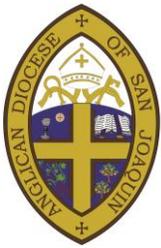
If you want to know the fourth path, I will tell you it is the **giving of alms.** It has great power.

And finally, if someone acts with **modesty and humility**, that path is no less effective as a way to deprive sin of its substance. Look at the publican, who had no good deeds to speak of. In place of good deeds he offered humility, and the huge burden of his sins fell away.

So now I have shown you the five paths of repentance. First, condemnation of sins. Second, forgiving the sins of those near us. Third, prayer. Fourth, almsgiving. Fifth, humility.

So do not be idle, but every day advance along all these paths at once. They are not hard paths to follow. Poverty is no excuse for not setting out on the journey. Even if you are destitute you can do all these things: put aside anger, carry humility in front of you, pray hard, condemn your sins. Poverty is no obstacle – not even to that path of penitence that demands money: that is, almsgiving. Remember the story of the widow's mite.

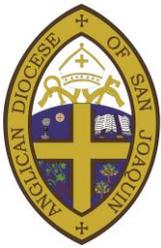
Now we have learnt the right way to heal our wounds, let us apply these remedies. Let us regain true health and confidently receive the blessings of Holy Communion. Thus we may come, filled with glory, to the glory of Christ's kingdom, and receive its eternal joys through the grace, mercy and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ."



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Bishop's Note: March 10th, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines – Renewal of Vows

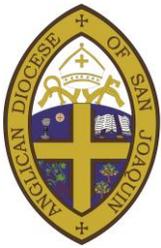
Today as you read your Bishop's Note, the clergy of the diocese and I will be gathering in the Chapel of the Holy Innocents to pray together, celebrate Holy Communion together, AND to renew our Ordinal Vows – those vows we took at our ordination. We will recommit ourselves to God and one another, under authority, to dedicate ourselves to the prayer, study, and faithful preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments, in order to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

I have to tell you what an honor it is for me to serve with these men and women, your priests and deacons. They so freely give of themselves in the service of the Lord and in loving God's people – I am daily amazed and blessed to be counted their bishop.

In addition to our renewal of vows, I will bless the Holy Oils that we use in the church. Below is an explanation on those oils and their uses.

I pray you all a truly blessed Lent.

Bishop Menees



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Bishop's Note: March 17th, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Spiritual Direction

As I write this Bishop's Note I am in Asheville, North Carolina, on retreat with several bishops from around the Anglican Church in North America. Not surprisingly, we are hitting on the subject of our walk with Christ and the importance of being both under Spiritual Direction and serving as a Spiritual Director.

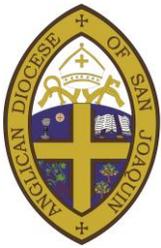
I was first introduced to the whole concept of Spiritual Direction back in 1979. I was in my first year of college and had just begun my journey with the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis. Fr. Bob Woodfield, the associate priest at All Saints, Long Beach - my home parish - was also a Third Order Franciscan. As an aspirant with the Third Order, one of my tasks was to establish a Franciscan Rule of Life, which included, at the top of the list, meeting monthly with a Spiritual Director. I went to Fr. Woodfield for assistance. "What is a Spiritual Director?" I asked. Fr. Woodfield explained that a Spiritual Director is a mature Christian whose life demonstrates a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ, who is gifted as a compassionate listener, and who has the gift of discernment. Fr. Woodfield explained that normally one meets monthly with their Spiritual Director, who, if a priest, can also be your confessor. However, being a Spiritual Director is not uniquely a priestly gifting. Any mature Christian may be called and gifted to serve as a Spiritual Director. Fr. Woodfield explained that a Spiritual Director helps us discern how Christ is active in our lives, and how we can be more attentive to Him and to the Holy Spirit moving in and among us. Fr. Woodfield also explained that Spiritual Direction is not psychological counseling. There is generally no fee for a Spiritual Director; they don't practice psychoanalysis or psychology, they simply listen attentively, give feedback and direction on how to draw closer to God, and on how to live out our lives as God's adopted Children.

Needless to say, Fr. Woodfield was my first Spiritual Director thirty six years ago, and I've been in Spiritual Direction ever since. What a blessing to have someone who listens to me in a nonjudgmental way, and who has the authority to speak the truth to me in love. I value deeply the mirror that my Director holds up to me and the Grace that he helps me live into.

I wonder if the Lord might be calling you into a relationship with a Spiritual Director? These are men and women whom you trust and who demonstrate a mature Christian life. This Lent, perhaps you could have a conversation with one of your clergy and ask them about Spiritual Direction?

I would also bid your prayers as we establish, within the Diocese, the Schofield Institute for Spiritual Direction and Pastoral Care. It is our prayer that in the next eighteen months we can call and fund a director, set aside a space, and establish a curriculum to train men and women across the diocese and across the country to become Spiritual Directors.

Please join me in prayer... "Almighty God, father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the gift of your son and His example of leading people to recognize the Kingdom of God in their midst. We thank you for the men and women throughout the centuries who have picked up this ministry and faithfully served the church. We pray that you will raise up in the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin



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men and women who are willing and able to pick up the torch and serve you by becoming Spiritual Directors. This we humbly ask in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."