

Celebrating Lent At Resurrection Parish

By Henry M. Holden

On March 4, Resurrection Parish in Randolph held its semi-annual Day of Reflection. Their guest speaker was Benedictine Father Jude Salus, OSB. The theme: "Journey with Christ through Lent - Forgiveness, Grace and Love."

Jude, has celebrated more than 40 years as a priest, and 26 years as pastor at Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel, in Cedar Knolls, before retiring in 2015.

The day was a blend of prayer, humor, and insight, and began with a Continental breakfast at 8 a.m. followed by Jude's presentation.

More than 140 people spent the day honoring the forgiveness and love of

God. "With his help, we can have our daily faults and failings forgiven, and have our hearts changed," said Jude. "Lent can make a difference in our relationship with God. Lent can be a time to grow more deeply in God's grace, and accept His forgiveness."

Lent began as a way for Christians to remind themselves of the value of repentance. The austerity of the Lenten season was seen as similar to how people in the Old Testament fasted and repented in sackcloth and ashes.

But modern-day Lent is a time of homecoming to Jesus.

"Lent is not a penitential time alone, but a joyful time, when we can see other's kindness, goodness,

laughter and smiles," said Jude. "When we choose to see that love, then we're gravitating into making ourselves available to others, that also makes us vulnerable. This availability, this vulnerability, what does that make us? Expectant!"

"If you want to see faults, and failures, knock yourself out. Most of us have a thousand. We're human beings. If you want to see kindness, and gentleness, a sense of human joy, that's there too.

"You can't change anyone but yourself. You can change your mind. You can change your attitude, by deciding to be calm and gentle, and that can change your direction.

"Where are you looking

lately? Around your parish, around your table, around your families? How are you looking? If you want to see goodness and joy, is that on your Lenten Pilgrimage list?"

Jude raised the question, is suffering a punishment? "When we have a family heartache, when there is illness, a diagnosis we don't understand, is our loved one being punished? When you look at a crucifix how can you possibly say that God the Father is punishing his son?"

"Once we stop that attitude, once we realize that the suffering, like Christ's, is redemptive, it causes us to come out of ourselves and bring us more lovingly not into the future, but to seize, and live in the

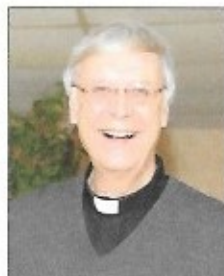
present moment, grateful for our faith, family and friends.

"We don't figure out our illnesses, and we can't determine what is going to happen, but we can realize that it is our attitude, and it is our choice, to make a change.

"When we get up in the morning we don't say, 'Jesus I'm up. Don't let me sin.' Is that the prayer we want to have?"

"Or maybe the prayer should be, 'Jesus, let me be your hands, let me be your face, let me be your feet. Take me where someone needs to be lifted.' Perhaps it's your neighbor who needs help with her food shopping, or a lift to the doctor.

"Isn't that much more



dramatic than Jesus don't let me sin? We must see now, this loving Jesus, not in ritual, but in that joy of walking with someone who loves us so much. He is our Savior and Lord, our unconditional lover, and unconditional friend. When we let that wash over us, we are not the same person. We can't be, and that is what Lent is about. Go-

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ing back with all our heart and understanding this God who loves us and inspires us is something we can't take for granted."

Jude suggested one looks again at values, motivations, and willingness, despite life's hurts to see Jesus' footprints in that space.

"Maybe we need to be more patient, maybe we should start listening more

often. Sometimes we don't listen to the very old, or the very young. Maybe we should listen better.

"Lent is a time to step back and see what are some of the changes you'd like to make," said Jude. "And that nothing for you is going to be hurtful or hateful. Once you begin to do that, it begins to have that change effect.

"As you're celebrating your journey what things

happened provisionally? Maybe you did get that diagnoses, maybe you lost your job, but maybe, just maybe, you said, 'Jesus, point me in the right direction. Where do you want me to go? What do you want me to do?' When you begin to trust him, and love him, you will start noticing that we become a lifeline, and the lifeline comes back to us."