

LivingFaith

WHERE FAITH MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

Rededicating Ourselves to The Spirit of Encounter

Video Link:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7kuDzeulRc&t=11s>
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Introduction

Welcome to Lent! Some years it seems that Ash Wednesday comes around quickly and other years it seems to be delayed in its arrival. This year is a case of the latter. The season of Lent arrives rather late this year and Easter will be on the third Sunday in April.

For me, whenever Lent arrives it always seems like a shock to the system. As human beings who bear the burden of the effects of Original Sin, penance and fasting will never come naturally to us. Our bodies and their appetites are often like little children that are never placated – they just keep coming back for more. But like small children, we can learn self-control when we don't let our appetites win. The traditional practices of Lent – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – help us to do battle against the temptations which without fail come into each of our lives!

You have chosen to be part of a LivingFaith small group and to walk this Lenten season with your group-mates. Having companions on a journey often makes the journey easier and usually more enjoyable! It's my prayer that your experience in LivingFaith will be life-giving for you and your group-mates this Lent. I thank you for taking advantage of this opportunity and for your group leaders who are guiding you through these weeks' reflections.

The Spirit of Encounter

The title of our homily series and our LivingFaith sessions this Lent is: "The Spirit of Encounter." This theme combines the overarching theme we have been working with this year, "Rededicate" with a reflection on the five gospels of Lent which each tell the story of an encounter with Jesus.

Let's recall what the theme "Rededicate" is all about. As a community we have put great effort, time, and money into beautifying the church buildings at St. Agnes and St. William of York. The new altar of St. Agnes Church was dedicated this past August and, along with it, the whole building was rededicated to the worship of God.

Yet, church buildings exist to facilitate a relationship. They exist so that people can connect with God. They are places where divinity and humanity meet. In the church buildings we are fed by God's Word and the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist.

Just as church buildings need to be renovated and refreshed because of the passage of time, from time-to-time as believers we also need to be rededicated. We have to take a step back and look at the direction we've been heading and make some course corrections. We have to get back to the basics. Among these are:

- Our fundamental importance in God's eyes,
- A personal relationship with Jesus,
- And a commitment to the mission of the Church as it is lived out in the community of our parishes.

And then as believers we are rededicated to the mission of the Church:

- Showing the face of Christ to others
- And building a Christian community where strangers are welcomed and people feel like they belong.

We have taken the mission that the Lord Jesus gave to the Church to go and make disciples and formulated this into a Vision Statement and a Purpose Statement for our community. During Lent we will be studying Jesus' command and going deeper into our Vision and Purpose statements to understand what they mean all in light of the Lenten Gospels.

To refresh our memories, the Mission is given to us by Jesus in Matthew 28:19: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Our Vision Statement says: "At St. Agnes and St. William of York we are missionary disciples motivated by the love of God. Our family invites all to discipleship through encounter with Christ. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we worship, we serve, we grow in faith, hope, and love."

And our Purpose Statement reminds us that at St. Agnes and St. William of York we are "Forming a family of disciples united in Jesus Christ."

As each of the Lenten Gospels recounts an encounter, the Vision and Purpose Statements are meant to remind us of our calling to encounter the Lord in our lives and to invite others to their own encounter with him.

Conclusion

Once again, I thank you for participating in LivingFaith. Please know that all of you will be remembered in my prayers during Lent. It is my pray that God will abundantly bless each of our LivingFaith groups.

And so, let us pray:

Heavenly Father,

We ask your blessing upon our LivingFaith groups.

We ask you to bless our leaders for their generosity.

We ask you to bless all group members with an outpouring of your grace.

We rededicate ourselves to you, to the mission of making disciples, and to the Vision and Purpose of our St. Agnes and St. William of York Community.

We ask that just as we encounter the Lord Jesus in the scriptures of Lent we might encounter him anew every day of our lives so to make him known to our brothers and sisters.

We ask these and all of our prayers through the same Christ our Lord

Amen