

## ***WELCOMING THE LENTEN SEASON***

*Joel 2:12-18 — . 2 Corinthians 5:20 to 6:2 — . Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18*

### **REFLECTION**

Ash Wednesday yesterday ushered us in this Holy Season of Lent. The readings of Ash Wednesday outline the Lenten. Lent, as we outlined in these readings is a time of penance. It is that kind of time when we die to ourselves in some way. A time we try to live more fully before the Lord and others.

But this year being so unique someone may argue that the past eleven months a kind of a ‘never-ending Lent.’ They may be saying that since the onset of the pandemic, all year long, they have never stopped ‘dying to themselves.’ True, people have been unable to visit family members in hospital. People have not been able even to be with their loved ones as they were dying. Children and young people have had to die to their normal educational experience. Those with jobs have had to work from home. Yes, this is dying to normal human interaction. While parents are working from home, they have had to juggle helping their children with home schooling. Those living alone with limited mobility have experienced even greater isolation. It is true, the Lent we are beginning this year is Lent within a bigger Lenten Framework. If you feel that way, there are other areas you could dwell on in this year of the pandemic. Perhaps the best focus in this Year’s Lenten Period could be on two aspects: prayer and almsgiving.

Prayer could mean setting up on a journey toward growth in our love and trust of God which may have suffered a lot in the face of the pandemic. Through prayer we can seek God’s compassion and tenderness which is so much needed in these difficult times.

Almsgiving could mean growing in our care for others and care is at the heart of the fight to the coronavirus. WE all can be instruments of blessing and God’s graciousness to other people in so many ways. It takes all of us to give each other new courage and hope.

Let us make this Lent a graced time for ourselves and others, so that when Easter comes in seven weeks’ time, we can celebrate it with renewed joy and hope, not only for our parish community but for the whole world.