

# A Reflection from Fr. Canisius for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

Dear Parishioners,

As we move past the halfway point of our Lenten journey, we often need to hear words of encouragement to keep us focused on the real purpose of our Lenten disciplines. Today's readings are full of that life-giving encouragement. How has the journey been for you?

Many of us are committed to certain Lenten practices this holy season. Perhaps we are working to add more or certain types of prayer into our faith lives. Perhaps we have given something up. Whatever they are, each could be categorized as a certain type of gift. We are giving God our time or giving up something out of love for him. Any good Lenten practice is, in some way, a giving of ourselves, our desires, our effort, to God.

It is but a small gesture of love in return for the love we have been given. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.* Let us be clear. God does not "need" anything from us, but he wants us. He created us, he loves us, and he desires to be in relationship with us for eternity.

Into this space, God enters. God's care and healing are still present today. God loves us and wants to show that love in many ways. Look for the ways God is clearly working in your life and answering prayers. Ask God for the big things, as well as the small. Share your stories with others, and even if the answer is not what you expected, rejoice anyway. Rejoice (*Laetare*) because you know that God loves you and is by your side through every difficulty.

Our Lenten journey and its many disciplines are meant to remind us of where we are in our journey of faith. We, too, need to encounter Christ in a new way and not simply rely on our "knowledge" of him. It is only in that true encounter that we can know the full reality of the promises God makes to each of us through baptism: The promise of a share in his eternal life and the promise of renewal beginning in our lives today and blossoming into the fullness of life.

I am pleased to share with you that the Archbishop has accepted to ordain Bienvenu as deacon on **May 18, 2024**. This is the last step before ordination to the priesthood. We are grateful to be part of Bienvenu's journey. Thank you all for providing a suitable parish setting for his pastoral year experience. As Bienvenu prepares for ordination, I kindly ask that you keep him in your daily prayers.

On **Wednesday, March 20**, we will have a number of priests available to hear confessions at our **Pastorate Lenten Penance Service** at St. Gabriel. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring your family to the Sacrament of Penance as preparation for the celebration of Easter! We will begin at 7:00 PM.

Have a blessed week!

~ *Fr. Canisius*