

We've had a particularly *icy* winter this year,

Yet our *hope* for *spring* is very *real*.

Lent is a season for the *thawing* of *icy hearts*.

Be *unafraid* to go into the *depths* of our *inner room* –

That place where we *really* live –

In the *depths* of our hearts' *desires* and *motivations*.

Lent is a time to *look* at the scars that *sin* has marked our hearts with,

Never *alone* –

But with *Jesus*, who gives us *His* heart to make us whole.

The Lord God *loves* us –

We were *made* from His love –

And our hearts are *restless* until they rest in Him who cries *out* to us:

Return to me – with your **whole** heart.

In the *Gospel*,

Jesus encourages the Lenten practices of *giving alms*,

Of *Fasting*, and of *praying*.

He says to do them in *secret*.

But Jesus is *not* against public displays of giving glory to God.

The ashes on our *foreheads* witness to our desire for *God* to be our life.

And we're called to be *ambassadors* of Christ to *all* we meet.

But Jesus *challenges* our *motivations* in the *heart*.

To *repent* is to turn *away* from sin and to *surrender* our hearts to the heart of *God*.

The *Lenten* journey is a journey *home* –

Back into the heart of the *Father*.

All our *fasting* and *abstaining* and our *giving* to others in need,

Are an act of letting *go* of our *attachments* to this world,

That is oh, so *temporary*.

And it's a *grounding* in our *true* being – *beings* made for *loving*.

So may we let *Christ* inhabit our hearts –

May He take on *our* flesh –

Allowing a little bit of heaven to shine from our hearts *now* –

Every time we fast from *selfishness* –

Every time we *give* of ourselves in *caring* for our neighbors.

And take time to *pray* – to be *refilled* –

By the Lord who wants to give us *everything* of *Himself*.

Consider our Lenten practices.

Do they *move* our hearts into the heart of *God*?

If *not* – then *drop* it –

And *ask* God: what will draw me *closer* to You – in the inner room of my heart?

The Church observes *fasting* on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

But this fasting need *not* just be *physical* in terms of actual food and drink,

But a *spiritual* fasting –

That frees us to feast on the *true bread from heaven*.

So once *again*, I invite you to reflect on spiritual fasting:

Fast from judging others; Feast on Christ dwelling in us.

Fast from thoughts of illness; Feast on the healing power of God.

Fast from words that pollute; Feast on phrases that purify.

Fast from discontent; Feast on gratitude.

Fast from anger; Feast on patience.

Fast from worry; Feast on God's providence.

Fast from complaining; Feast on appreciation.

Fast from unrelenting pressures; Feast on unceasing prayer.

Fast from bitterness; Feast on forgiveness.

Fast from discouragement; Feast on hope.

Fast from idle gossip; Feast on purposeful silence.