

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Last week, I wrote about the importance of starting a prayer life, and I gave some beginning suggestions. What's next? How do we grow deeper in prayer? Prayer, of course, is communication or communion with God. We can speak spontaneously to God about what's going on. But beyond these prayers – which traditionally have been called “discursive prayer” (anything where we are talking to God, either spontaneously, or “rote” prayers) – there are two other kinds of prayer: mediation and contemplation.

Let's look at meditation. Now, don't get this term confused with eastern meditation. Meditation in the Christian tradition is different from that meditation. When we speak of meditation in the Christian tradition, it means delving into the mysteries of God by thinking, pondering, or, as I often call it, “chewing” on the mystery. We could do this by thinking about an attribute of God (His love, His mercy, his goodness, etc.), by delving into a passage from Scripture, or pondering over the Passion (the suffering) and death of Christ.

This last one, meditating on the Passion of Christ, is very important. The saints talk about how it is necessary to grow in the spiritual life. We look at the suffering of Jesus not as an intellectual exercise, or to look at the cruelty, but to see Love. Remember, love is the central mystery of our Faith, for “God is love” (I John 4:8, 16). Love is selfless out-pouring for the good of the other. God does this all of the time, but the most visible time is when He suffered for us. We look at His agony in the garden, and how He takes on our sins to save us. We see how He was scourged and crowned with thorns so that we could have a new body and crown of glory. We are attentive to the details of His condemnation so that we can be pardoned. And so on and so forth. His love took on all of our brokenness and sin so that we could be set free and saved. When we spend time meditating on His Passion, we see His love, and that love then allures us; we begin to love Him more.

So how do we do this? One traditional way is through the Stations of the Cross. We walk with Jesus through fourteen points of His Passion, from His condemnation through His death and burial, with meditations on His love. At St. Patrick Parish, we pray the Stations every Friday in Lent at 7:00pm in the Church, but you can do them on your own at Church (the Church is open all day during Lent), or at home. You can even pray them with Bishop Libasci on youtube at: [youtube.com/watch?v=E3EizdJwxus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3EizdJwxus). Another way of meditating on the Passion are by praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. You can also open your Bible to the Passion Narratives and read through them (Mt. 26-27, Mk. 14-15, Lk. 22-23, Jn. 18-19).

With all of these, you can use your imagination to see the scene. Where are you, or who are you in the scene. Place yourself there. Maybe you are Veronica, who wipes the face of Jesus. In this, you can take great care to lovingly wipe Jesus' face of all the blood and dirt and spittle. Maybe you see yourself as Simon, and you can help Jesus carry His cross. Maybe you are you, but you see yourself at the foot of the Cross with Mary and John, and Mary points out to you the love of Christ. Maybe you focus on the words of Christ on the Cross, and ponder how you can forgive those who hurt you, since Christ forgave all who crucified Him. Maybe you are in the Garden of Gethsemane, and you strive to stay awake and watch with Christ, unlike Peter, James and John who slept.

The more we spend time with Christ, the more we meditate on His Passion, the more His love will become *real* to us. It won't just be something we read about in the Bible, or hear about at Church – we will come to know His love, and so fall in love with Christ. Remember, Jesus IS alive! He is someone with whom we have relationship. He is not a memory, but a living person who desires to have an intimate relationship with us – with you! As we come to know His love more and more, we will be drawn to that love.

I encourage you to take the time this Lent to be a good steward of your time – the time God has given you. He gave us time in this world so we can know Him, and love Him, and serve Him, and so be with Him forever in Heaven. Use this time well and get to know the Lord of love. Make a step this Lent and grow in your prayer so that you can know Him more intimately, love Him more deeply, and serve Him in joy!