

Be Not Afraid

“Lent and Easter 2011”

Bishop John M. LeVoir

Some might look at their calendars for February and wonder: "Where is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent? Isn't Ash Wednesday always in February?" Many years, Ash Wednesday is in February. However, this year it is not. Why?

The date of Ash Wednesday depends on the date of the celebration of Easter. In 2011, Easter is almost the latest date that it can possibly be. It is on April 24. The latest that it can be is April 25.

So, starting on April 24, when we count backwards "forty days" (the period of Lent) on the calendar, we arrive at March 9. In 2011, Ash Wednesday is March 9 and that is when the season of Lent begins.

Knowing the date of Ash Wednesday helps us in our proximate preparation for Lent. How will we spend Lent 2011? We know that Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, but what shape will these Lenten practices take in our lives? How and when will we pray? From what shall we fast? How will we see to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged? By preparing for Lent now, we will set ourselves up for a fruitful Lenten season and consequently a fruitful Easter season.

Two Roman Catholic Cardinals in one week

It is a rare occasion when a Roman Catholic cardinal visits Minnesota. However, during the week of Jan. 2, 2011, two cardinals visited Minnesota. One was newly named cardinal, Cardinal Raymond Burke, and the other was Cardinal John Foley.

Cardinal Burke visited the Church of St. Michael in Stillwater as part of a fundraising dinner for Catholic education in the three-parish community of St. Charles, St. Mary, and St. Michael. He celebrated Mass and was the main speaker at the Light Their Way Dinner.

At the dinner, Cardinal Burke spoke of the irreplaceable role of the Catholic education of children and the critical role played by Catholic schools. He encouraged us to support Catholic schools with our prayers, resources, and efforts. He highlighted the fact that both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI supported Catholic school education unswervingly. For example, when Pope Benedict XVI came to the United States in 2008, he spoke of Catholic education. He said: "Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth." Cardinal Burke's talk was very well received.

Cardinal Foley came to St. Paul for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of "The Catholic Spirit," the newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Cardinal Foley is the Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The order is composed of Catholic men and women throughout the world. The twofold purpose of the order is to work for the personal holiness of its members and to help support Catholic initiatives in the Holy Land, such as Catholic churches, schools, and hospitals.

Cardinal Foley spoke about the importance of supporting Christians in the Holy Land, especially at this time in history. Many Christians are leaving the Holy Land because the political environment is hostile to them. He encouraged us to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land for our own spiritual benefit and to view firsthand what the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is doing for Christians in the Holy Land.

Blessing the church organ

On Sunday, January 9, 2011, I was privileged to celebrate Solemn Vespers for the Baptism of the Lord at the Church of St. Mary in Sleepy Eye. During the service, I blessed the church's refurbished pipe organ.

The music during the liturgy was beautiful. Afterward, several hymns were played on the organ to demonstrate the range of sound that can be produced by this magnificent instrument.

During the homily, I recalled the words of Pope Benedict XVI at the blessing of a new organ at Regensburg's Alte Kapelle on Sept. 13, 2006. At that time, the Holy Father said, "The organ has always been considered, and rightly so, the king of musical instruments, because it takes up all the sounds of creation . . . and gives resonance to the fullness of human sentiments, from joy to sadness, from praise to lamentation. By transcending the merely human sphere, as all music of quality does, it evokes the divine. The organ's great range of timbre, from piano through to a thundering fortissimo, makes it an instrument superior to all others. It is capable of echoing and expressing all the experiences of human life. The manifold possibilities of the organ in some way remind us of the immensity and the magnificence of God."

February, 2011

No Tengas Miedo

Cuaresma y Pascua 2011

Algunos se preguntarán al ver su calendario el mes de Febrero: "¿Dónde está el Miércoles de Ceniza y el comienzo de Cuaresma? ¿No se celebra el Miércoles de Ceniza en Febrero? Por varios años, el Miércoles de Ceniza es en Febrero. Sin embargo, no lo es este año. ¿Porqué?"

La fecha del Miércoles de Ceniza depende con la fecha de la celebración de Pascua. Este año, la Pascua es casi la última fecha que se pueda celebrar. Es el 24 de Abril. La última fecha que se puede celebrar es el 25 de abril.

Por lo tanto, el 24 de Abril cuando comenzamos a contar al revés "cuarenta días" (período de Cuaresma) en el calendario, llegamos al 9 de Marzo. Este año el Miércoles de Ceniza es el 9 de Marzo y es cuando se da inicio a la temporada de Cuaresma.

Saber la fecha del Miércoles de Ceniza nos ayuda con la preparación inmediata para la temporada de Cuaresma. ¿Qué iremos hacer esta Cuaresma? Sabemos que durante ese tiempo es de oración, ayuno y limosna, pero de que forma estas prácticas cuaresmales darán impacto en nuestra vida. ¿Cómo y cuándo debemos orar? ¿Cómo veremos las necesidades de los pobres y de los más desafortunados? Cuando nos preparamos desde ahora tendremos la ventaja de tener una temporada cuaresmal muy provechosa.