

Dear Parishioners,

As we enter the holy season of Lent, our parish will adopt several simple liturgical practices to help us pray more intentionally, to follow the Church's guidance for this penitential season, and to draw more deeply into the mystery we will celebrate at Easter.

What will change during Lent:

**Several sung mass parts will be in Latin**

During Lent, we will sing the *Sanctus*, the Memorial Acclamation, and the *Agnus Dei* in Latin. We are doing this in direct response to the Second Vatican Council, which taught that “steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the mass which pertain to them” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 54; cf. no. 36). This is a modest, practical way to embrace our Roman tradition, and it is also a common practice in our diocese.

**We will reduce instrumental music, using it only as needed to support singing**

The Church's liturgical norms call for restraint with instruments in Lent: the organ and other instruments are used “only in order to support the singing,” with limited exceptions (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], no. 313). In that spirit, we will reduce instrumental accompaniment as far as reasonably possible, while still using instruments when they are genuinely needed to support congregational song.

**We will not decorate the altar or church with flowers**

During Lent, the altar is not decorated with flowers; exceptions include *Laetare* Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent) as well as solemnities and feasts (GIRM, no. 305). This outward simplicity helps reflect the season's call to conversion and spiritual focus.

**There will be no recessional hymn. We will leave mass in silence**

After the dismissal, we will depart in silence, without singing. This is meant to foster reverent prayer and recollection. The Council explicitly teaches that active participation includes not only responses and singing, but also “a reverent silence” at the proper times (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 30), and the GIRM likewise highlights sacred silence as a genuine part of the celebration (GIRM, no. 45). Leaving quietly is one small, concrete way to carry the prayer of the liturgy into the rest of the day.

**Why we are doing this**

Lent is not a season of hopelessness or gloom. It is a season of grace. The Church teaches that Lent has a twofold character—it prepares us for baptismal renewal and calls us to penance—so that we may celebrate the paschal mystery with greater depth (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 109). Penance is not about pretending joy does not exist; it is about stepping back from distractions and sensual comforts so

we can refocus on the spiritual life, examine our consciences, and recognize our dependence on God.

When we embrace the full spirit of Lent—prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and worthy worship—our joy at Easter is intensified. The more honestly we enter into conversion, the more fully we can rejoice in the Lord’s resurrection.

**A request**

I ask you to participate actively in these practices: sing the ordinary parts with faith and attention, accept the simpler soundscape of the season, and embrace the silence at the end of mass. These are small changes, but they can bear real fruit when we do them together. In doing so, we offer fitting worship to our heavenly Father and allow Lent to form us more deeply as disciples.

Please know of my prayers for you and your families throughout this holy season.

In Christ,

Fr. Adam Royal  
Pastor  
St. Alphonsus Catholic Church