

## Spiritual Reflection

I'm happy to share this reflection in the midst of our Lenten season, a particularly important time for all Catholics but especially for the members of the Order of Malta. Lent reminds us of our threefold mission as Catholics: to become more prayerful while looking for ways to make the Eucharist the center of our lives; to examine our consciences to see where we've become complacent and might need to pull back from some of our worldly cares through fasting and penance; finally to look at ways we can become more involved in the community through service, seeing if we can't make a difference through many of our Malta initiatives to help those who desperately need what we can provide.

Most Catholics try to do at least one of the above, if not all three, during the Lenten season. These days of renewal should be particularly important to us as we have entered the Order with the belief that our own spiritual journey and own personal growth are enhanced and strengthened by the Order of Malta. A number of us will celebrate the Easter season with a trip to Lourdes in early May: again, an opportunity for greater prayer, yes, some sacrifice and certainly greater service to our beloved malades.

So what is making this Lent special for you? What are the opportunities provided by your parish and local community to strengthen your faith? How is your membership in the Order challenging you to be a better Catholic and disciple of the Lord? These are questions I ask myself as I find that my own spiritual life needs to be strengthened by these six and a half weeks of Lent. Even we priests can become lackadaisical about the conversation we call prayer. I don't pray enough and I don't always pray well. Lent renews that commitment. Sometimes as a priest I become too satisfied with my life and forget the sacrifices made by so many who can't afford food, don't have jobs and can't support their families. Fasting and penance remind me how lucky I am. A simple "Rice Bowl" on my desk, a visit to a shelter, a chance to feed the poor on the streets: these all remind me, in the words of Isaiah, that "This rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own."

Finally, I'm encouraged to share more of my resources with those in need whether it be as I walk the streets of Washington, through regular collections like the Annual Cardinal's Appeal or through my own contributions through the Order of Malta and its charities. I'm reminded of the need for almsgiving to our church and to those less fortunate.

In this year of faith, I encourage all of our members to look carefully at their own journey, where they are and where they want to be and to make a supreme effort to use these weeks as intended for renewal, spiritual growth and yes, for change. A happy and blessed Easter to you all. - **Rev. Msgr.**

**John Enzler**, *Magistral Chaplain and Chaplain to the Board*