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**- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -**

**February 13, 2024**

**Why do we have the season of Lent?**

Merrillville -- In a column written for the Northwest Indiana Catholic, Bishop Robert J. McClory describes Lent as a time to get “back to basics’ to renew our love for Jesus and live out his calling for us.”

The bishop explains that the season of Lent “imitates the forty days Jesus spent in the desert, which was a time of intense prayer before he began his public ministry.”

He further notes that “the practice of forty days is not only rooted in the time Jesus spent in the desert, but also corresponds to other biblical references to the number forty. Forty is found in the bible as a time of testing, trial, penance, purification, and renewal.”

According to the Bishop of Gary, “we are called to fully embrace Lent as a season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.” How is this done? The bishop explains that this is a time to “intensify our prayer time, spending more time absorbing the love of God in our hearts. We intensify our fasting practices, so we give up certain things to draw ourselves closer to the Lord. We give alms — acts of charity to others — so the love that God has given us can be shared to others.”

He clarifies further that “we don’t do this to show off to others,” noting that Holy Scripture tells us our left hand shouldn’t know what the right hand is doing. The purpose of this practice, according to the bishop, “is primarily about our relationship with God.”

Bishop McClory encourages everyone to use this season of Lent to reflect on how to draw closer to the Lord and to ask the Lord to reveal what he is asking of us.

On Feb. 14, Ash Wednesday, the Cathedral of the Holy Angels in Gary will be open all day, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for distribution of ashes and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Beginning with Ash Wednesday and continuing every Friday during Lent, Bishop McClory will share video messages to inspire and accompany others during their journey toward Easter.

The videos can be found on the diocesan website: <https://dcgary.org/2024LentSeries>. To receive the Bishop’s Lenten messages directly, text GARY to 84576 or visit [dcgary.flocknote.com](http://dcgary.flocknote.com).

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**About the Diocese of Gary**

*The Diocese of Gary serves an estimated 170,000 Catholics in Lake, Porter, LaPorte, and Starke counties through 58 parishes, two missions, and one Catholic student center. The diocese has 17 parish elementary schools and three diocesan high schools, serving 5,985 students. An additional 5,610 students are enrolled in parish Catholic formation programs. The diocese is home to one private high school and two post-secondary institutions. More than two million are served by Catholic-affiliated agencies including seven Catholic hospitals, residential and daycare facilities for adults and children, and centers for Social Services.*

**MEDIA RESOURCES:**

You can find numerous photos of last year's [Ash Wednesday activities on our Flickr page](https://www.flickr.com/photos/diocesefgary/albums/72177720306197280/with/52706618804).  
(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/diocesefgary/albums/72177720306197280/with/52706618804>)  
Please feel free to download and use any of these to accompany your story (photo credit is simply Diocese of Gary).

QR Code for the Lent Series



<https://dcgary.org/2024LentSeries>