

lent

Lenten philosophy targets outreach

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Take the "up" out of "giving up," and what do you have? The Lenten spirit, post-Vatican II style.

Traditionally, Lent was seen as the period to part with indulgences such as candy, television, dessert or cigarettes. This would seemingly fit into the directive found in the 1983 Code of Canon Law's regulations on Lenten abstinence and fasting, where Catholics are encouraged to perform "acts of penance" during Lent.

Yet according to Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, sacrifices made by Catholics during Lent have changed in tone in the three decades following the Second Vatican Council. Workmaster stressed that penance should now focus on people around us, as opposed to being a strictly individual discipline.

"Penance has always been kind of a negative thing — 'doing without.' Since Vatican II, it's been 'do with' — go make a positive contribution," Workmaster said. "Rather than giving up something, we're also encouraged to do something positive. For example, avoid getting in arguments with family members. Or do volunteer work at a soup kitchen, or by working with AIDS patients."

"Lent should be celebrated through acts of charity, through almsgiving — reaching out to the poor, sick and afflicted," agreed Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, auxiliary bishop of the



Lenten rules and regulations for 1995 will include a diocesan dispensation on March 17 for the feast of St. Patrick (above). St. Patrick's Day falls on a Lenten Friday this year.

Rochester diocese.

At the same time, Bishop Hickey pointed out that the customary self-denial discipline can be interrelated with these actions.

"One of the good Lenten practices is to cut down on TV, but cutting down is not enough. If you waste that time, you're not getting anywhere," Bishop Hickey acknowledged.

Workmaster asserted that the spiritual challenge presented by these newer forms of penance may prove more difficult than traditional Lenten sacrifices.

"In many instances it's more of a penance to do the positive thing. It might be harder to love your neighbor than to give up meat," she said.

Speaking of giving up meat, another variation to be found in Lenten regulations — at least for 1995 — centers around St. Patrick's Day.

Since the holiday this year falls on a Lenten Friday, Bishop Matthew H. Clark has granted dispensation for March 17. This means that all diocesan Catholics, age 14 and up, are permitted to eat meat that day.

Dispensation occasionally occurs when a holiday or some other special celebration, such as a wedding reception, falls on a day of abstinence. In addition, dispensation can be granted to people who, perhaps for health reasons, are unable to abstain or fast. The dispensation can be granted by a bishop or pastor.

However, Bishop Hickey pointed out that a dispensation for those who celebrate St. Patrick's Day should not be treated as a "freebie."

"Those dispensed are expected to do something else — other acts of charity" to make up for the dispensation, he said.

Other than in matters of dispensation, these are the following Lenten regulations for fast and abstinence:

•All Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence, as is Ash Wednesday. Abstinence is defined as refraining from eating meat at all meals on those days.

•Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting. Those who fast are permitted one full meal on fast days, along with two other meals small enough that together they do not equal a full meal.

•All Catholics 14 years of age or older are bound by the law of abstinence.

•All Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are bound by the law of fasting.

•Catholics are especially encouraged to perform acts of penance during the Lenten season.

Lenten program to be conducted in Tier parishes

Parishes in Chemung and Schuyler counties have set their second Adult Education Lenten Series.

Sessions will be held on March 5, 14, 21, 28 and April 4, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Locations, speakers and topics are as follows:

March 5 — St. Anthony's Hall, 209 Front St., Elmira: Father Joseph Hart of St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester, "The Consistent Life Ethic."

March 14 — St. John the Baptist Hall, Lake and Second streets, Elmira: Father Richard Farrell of St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira, "Euthanasia."

March 21 — Our Lady of Lourdes Hall, 1100 W. First St., Elmira: Sister Barbara Moore, RSM, of Rochester's Highland Hospital, "The Death Penalty."

March 28 — Notre Dame HS, 1400 Maple Ave., Elmira: Dr. Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, St. Bernard's Institute president, "Violence."

April 4 — St. Mary Our Mother Auditorium, 811 Westlake St., Horseheads: Dr. Marvin Mich, St. Bernard's Institute dean, "Abortion."

Cost is \$2 per session. Tickets are available through parish offices and will also be sold at the door on a first-come, first-served basis.

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