



# BECAUSE *we are* CATHOLIC

## Lent: A Forty-Day Retreat

The season of Lent is a religious observance in the liturgical calendar featuring a 40-day period of prayer, fasting and reflection leading up to Easter Sunday. Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the Season of Lent when believers receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their foreheads.

"I like to approach Lent as a mini retreat," said Rev. Jeff Dausas, pastor at St. Andrew by the Bay in Annapolis. "It is like a 40-day retreat. A retreat is a time to step back and a time to let God build something new. I love architecture and building. I like to think on Ash Wednesday you are taking a building down and letting God start over. It is a neat image and I like to approach the whole 40 days that way."

Dausas presided over the 9 a.m. Ash Wednesday Mass, distributing ashes to more than 125 parishioners. Serving the Broadneck area, St. Andrew by the Bay is a dynamic parish, featuring 1,800 registered families that enjoys sharing the love of Jesus through worship and ministry.

"It is a very young, active parish," added Dausas. "During Lent, we have a free soup supper on Friday evening with a lot of children and families. We also do a very simple Stations of the Cross with a separate activity geared toward the children, an arts and crafts type of activity. The kids love it."

Dausas has been loved in parishes all over the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Ordained in 1990, the 51-year-old Baltimore native has served at St. Louis, Clarksville (1990-97), St. Margaret, Bel Air, (1997-99), the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier, Hunt Valley (1999-2005), Church of the Holy Apostles, Gambrills (2005-08), Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (2008-10) and St. Timothy, Walkersville (2010-11) before arriving at St. Andrew by the Bay in the summer 2011.

"Each parish teaches you," said Dausas. "I have always tried to learn what the needs of the parish are. This parish is very vibrant, a lot of people involved in leadership, a lot of people involved in planning. They basically said this is what we think we should be doing and that is fine with me. They are willing to take the ball and run with it."

Catholics 14 years of age or older are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent. Many Catholics were taught as children to "give up something" for Lent.

"I still do but it not the focus anymore as I have gotten older," Dausas said. "Now it is more about how can I reform my own life so I can be more Christ-like. I am much more mindful of beyond the external things about Lent, the much deeper part. In my own life there are many areas where I need to be converted closer to



Maryland Catholic Conference communications director Mike Gathagan (left) with friend Rev. Jeff Dausas.

Christ. I could probably have Lent every day of the year and it still wouldn't be good enough."

Lent ends Holy Thursday. Since this is more than 40 days some argue that Sundays are not counted so Good Friday and Holy Saturday are included.

"I like to enter to the fullness of Lent. I don't cheat on Sundays," said Dausas. "If you are going to do it, go all in."

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