

Pastor Bill Mugnolo

St. John/Zion Parish

“Love and Sacrifice Together”

With Easter annually being a “movable” feast—it can be celebrated anywhere between about March 22nd and April 25th—the starting date for the season of Lent is also something that is also “movable”. Lent can begin anywhere from early February until mid-March depending on the Easter date falling on “the first Sunday after the first full moon of Spring”.

This year, the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, just so happens to fall on February 14th which is also Valentines’ Day. Talk about a contrast in celebrations! One is somber and sobering while the other is about sweets and “sweeties”. One is about the presence of red hearts while other features ashes being put upon our foreheads in the shape of a cross. (Maybe some pastors out there might get a bit creative and put the ashes on people’s foreheads in the shape of a heart!).

Truly, the two occasions falling on the same date can be of special significance to us. The color of the ashes serves to remind us of the darkness of our sins while the red hearts remind us of the love of Jesus Christ and how He took upon himself all our sins to the cross. Valentines’ Day marks a day of love. Ash Wednesday begins a season so often marked by sacrifice. In Jesus Christ, we have both love and sacrifice together as they come together as in no other. As the oft quoted words of John 3:16 tell us, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Love and sacrifice: they both come together right at the beginning of Lent on February 14, 2018. To mark this occasion, we will celebrate a full service at St. John at 7:00pm which will feature both Holy Communion and the distribution of the ashes. Prior to that, there will be a brief service with the distribution of the ashes at Zion at 12 Noon. This will enable those who are looking to not have to drive at night in the winter to receive the ashes during the daylight hours.

Then, further along into Lent. Our Maundy Thursday service will be held at Zion at 7:00pm on March 29th will Good Friday will be commemorated at 7:00pm at St. John. On these days, too, we will mark love and sacrifice in the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. May we in 2018, as two congregations together, have a blessed Lenten season.

Your Brother in Christ,

Pastor Bill