

By Pat Haggerty

Some people are wonderful planners! They are fastidious about preparations, especially when it deals with a trip or vacation. They map things out, make travel arrangements in plenty of time and do all the necessary prerequisite activities to ensure a smooth trip. I am not one of those people! Fortunately, I am married to one. My husband has folders within folders when planning a trip. I merely serve as his secretary---making a call here and there, paying bills and keeping track of his folders!

I propose that we look toward Lent as a trip in itself. It is in some regards, a forty-day journey of great importance. It leads to the greatest moment in our lives as Christians. It leads to the moment that is our redemption and our salvation. We need to travel this journey carefully, so that it will bring us to where we want to be. We must walk the walk of sacrifice, follow the map of penance and stay the course of prayer.

Like any journey, careful planning will make such a difference in the end! We will have given our trip much forethought, and we will know what we need to do. We will be prepared for anything; we will make the most of anything that comes our way.

The first reading for Ash Wednesday is our guide for our journey. Think of this advice very carefully: “Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God.” (Book of the Prophet Joel, 2:12)

It is clear, then, that our journey is one of a return to the Lord. How best can we make that return a reality? It is not too early to start planning our course. Let us reflect on which steps are best for us. There are many paths we can take, but we each need to select the one that is best

for us so that we will reach the desired end.

Will we add more spiritual reading to our lives? Do we want to keep a Lenten journal? Will we plan on attending daily Mass? Do we just want to find more time for prayer and reflection? Will we fast from certain things, whether in the form of food or daily obsessions?

Do some careful planning as you prepare for your journey. Keep the end in sight---a return to the Lord.