

By Pat Haggerty

After the very difficult winter that we have experienced, the actuality of spring is a true joy! It doesn't matter if the weather is still cold or even if we see a few flakes. Dare I say that? The fact is---spring is beginning.

There is something so hopeful about that distinction on the calendar. One can almost envision the flowers blooming and the birds chirping. It is a mindset. We expect good things, and they eventually will happen. We are willing to be patient because we know the outcome.

In some ways, the same can be said about Lent. Despite its bareness, its starkness, its austerity, Lent is a hopeful season. We don't often think of it that way, but it is. We function in a spirit of sacrifice and penance. Yet, we do so knowing that, in the end, we will be celebrating the joy of the Resurrection and the splendor of the risen Lord.

We have much to go through before then, and we should be mindful of each step along our Lenten way. Each step brings us closer to the mystery of our salvation. Each step reminds us of the utmost sacrifice performed for us. Each step calls us to our own life of selflessness and sacrifice.

It is not too late to deepen our commitment to our Lenten journey. We may have faltered along

the way, but there is still time to renew our spirit of sacrifice. There is still time to make this a true season of reflection. There is still time to follow Jesus along his path---to marvel in His miracles; to exult and praise Him as he enters Jerusalem amid the cheers of the crowd; to humble ourselves as we celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Thursday; and to walk with Mary as we remember the Lord's passion and death.

We need to echo the words of the hymn: "Lord, who throughout these forty days, for us did fast and pray; Teach us with you to mourn our sins, and close by you to stay…And through these days of penitence, and through your Passiontide; For evermore, in life and death, O, Lord, with us abide" (from "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days").

Stay close to the Lord. Walk with Him. Be hopeful!