Note from the Liturgist…

To Whom Will You Give Your Heart?

This week we are going to enter a new season of the Church Liturgical Year, the Lenten Season. It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The Lenten Season is a time of prayer and fasting and giving (**prayer**, **fasting**, and **almsgiving)**. Through these Lenten practices, Christians are urged to repent from sins and anticipate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we receive ashes on our foreheads, we hear the reminder: "Repent and Believe in the Gospel" OR "Turn away from Sin and Believe in the Gospel" OR "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" as a reminder of individual mortality.

The season of Lent is technically 40 days long, but the number of days between Ash Wednesday and Easter is 46. The Sundays of Lent are technically memorial of Christ's resurrection. Abstinence and fasting are not practiced on Sundays of Lent because each Sunday is a "Mini-Easter".

During the Lenten Season, we pray the Stations of the Cross. It is a devotional prayer where we commemorate and meditate on the trial, torture and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It originated in pilgrimages to Jerusalem. It desires to follow the Via Dolorosa.

Interestingly, both **Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday** fall on the same day this year. They are not related. Due to this coincidence, it is easy to ask this question: "To whom do we give our hearts?"

The heart is often used as a metaphor for the core or center representing the whole of the person. We hear in the readings on the first day of Lent (Ash Wednesday), it's all about God's invitation to go back in loving relationship with Him. Yes, He is always ready to welcome us. He wants us to hear his voice of mercy and be reconciled with him, to give our hearts to him.

On this day of hearts and as we begin the season of Lent, we ask ourselves: "To whom do we give our hearts? Can we give our hearts back to God?"

Ace Tupasi