

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent

By Elizabeth Lowe

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CATONSVILLE – Lent is a time for conversion, returning to Christ, repenting and believing in the Gospel, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori said during an Ash Wednesday Mass the morning of March 5.

“What does it mean to repent?” Archbishop Lori asked during his homily at Our Lady of the Angels, on the campus of Charlestown, a retirement community in Catonsville.

“To repent is to rethink, it’s to rethink our priorities, to be sure that first things are first and if they’re not to take concrete steps with God’s grace to set things aright.”

More than 250 people, most of whom are Charlestown residents, packed the ornate church to mark the start of Lent, a 40-day period of repentance, reflection and preparation leading up to Easter Sunday, April 20.

To view a slideshow from the event, navigate the arrows below. See a photo you would like to purchase? View our Smugmug gallery to make your selection.

Archbishop Lori also celebrated Ash Wednesday Mass at 12:10 p.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore and is scheduled to celebrate Mass at 5:30 p.m. at The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland.

The 40 days, which afford the faithful the opportunity to grow deeper in faith, begin on Ash Wednesday, when believers receive ashes, symbolizing mortality and a call to turn away from sin, in the shape of a cross on their foreheads.

“Lent is both a time of sacrifice and a time for disciplining the will so that our will will more naturally, more readily, choose the good and reject the bad,” Archbishop Lori said. “Our sacrifices during Lent ... can and should be offered for some particular intention.”

The archbishop urges Catholics to make Lenten resolutions that are challenging yet realistic.

“Our Lenten resolutions, whatever they are, should have something to do with what it is we’re struggling with,” he said. “It should be something that can be known only to ourselves and to God. What you end up doing is something that you have to think about through thought and through prayer.”

Archbishop Lori encourages the faithful to make “a good unburdening confession of

our sins” in the sacrament of reconciliation, which the Archdiocese of Baltimore is promoting through “The Light is on for You.” In addition to regular parish schedules, every church in the archdiocese will offer the sacrament from 3 to 8 p.m. April 11.

Rather than deny herself during these 40 days, Charlestown resident Tish Aiken, 82, plans to strengthen her prayer life.

“I add more prayers,” Aiken said. “At our age it (prayer) is more important. When you’re young it’s important to give something up.”

Mary Hurley, 77, plans to visit friends “that aren’t in good shape.”

“I hope it’s a good Lent for me, and a time to reflect,” said Hurley, another Charlestown resident.

On Ash Wednesday and Fridays during Lent, Catholics ages 14 and older are obliged to abstain from meat. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, those 18-59 should fast, which means taking one full meal (or two smaller meals not to exceed one meal) and only liquids between meals. The size of the full meal or the two smaller meals depends on the individual’s physical needs. If someone’s health may be seriously affected by abstaining or fasting, they are excused from the obligation.

The Lenten season includes people preparing to enter the church on Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil.

Watch video of Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski explaining the meaning of Lent.

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