

***What Are We Doing and Why: Lent?***  
***Begin With the End in View***

On this First Sunday of Lent we look all the way to the First Sunday of Easter for what we are doing and why throughout the Season of Lent. Most simply, the purpose of Lent for those already baptized is to prepare for Easter and the renewal of our Baptismal Promises. The season has two different, closely related parts: part one from Ash Wednesday through the third week of Lent, part two from the fourth Sunday of Lent until season's end. Part one calls us to a life of Gospel conversion and beginning anew through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, forgiveness, mercy, love of enemies, and honoring the demands of justice. Part two presents the mystery of Jesus as our healer and life-giver who gives us life through his confrontation with death, and gathers into one the many scattered children of God. The purpose of part one is to bring us to the recognition of our illusions about our selves; the second part points to Jesus as the one who can free us from those illusions. Thus, perhaps our Lenten disciplines would be *more* effective if we actually *fail* in our efforts at them than if we succeed, because their purpose is not to confirm us in our sense of competence and control, but to bring home to us our weakness and need for salvation.