

THE SHEPHERDS WALKING STICK

I would like to invite you all to the Penitential Rite tomorrow, (Monday) March 29, at 7 PM. It will start with prayers, reading from Holy Scripture and common examination of conscience. Individual confession and absolution follows right away. It is certainly fine to come late and just come for the confessions if other responsibilities hinder you to join the opening ritual. Fr. Jojo Anquilero of Morris will help me hear confessions. After doing the penance prescribed by the priest, one may go home in peace reconciled with God..... Please refer to my previous parish update with regards to the schedule for the Holy Week. Again, let me remind you that it is imperative that one has to sign up first at parish website before attending any of the celebrations..... HURRAY! The new 48-inch St. Joseph statue arrived Wednesday, March 24. I was hoping it will arrive in time for St. Joseph's solemnity last March 19. But now, I realized St. Joseph, as he always is, does not want the attention to himself but wants to lead us to greater love for the Lord Jesus through Our Lady. So, he willed his image to arrive in our parish on the eve of the solemnity of the Annunciation (March 25) wherein we commemorate the Word becoming flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Isn't that amazing?..... I am very much grateful to the donor of the St. Joseph statue. They want to remain anonymous (Mmmm...very St. Joseph-like), but I can assure them that their intentions will always be included every time I pray before the image..... Unfortunately, you may not see the new statue until Easter. After it was blessed last Thursday, it was covered with purple cloth just like the other images inside our church. Now, you might be wondering about the reason for covering the images during Lent. There are several opinions with regards to it. Firstly, some

authors say that it was probably a way of telling the faithful of long ago, who were often illiterate, that it is already Lent. Secondly, other authors say it is based on the part of the narrative of the Lord's Passion wherein he hid himself from the people (John 8:46-59). Thirdly, it is opined that the practice is based on the German custom dating back to the 9th century wherein the entire altar of the church is covered by the "hungertuch" (hunger cloth) during Lent. This cloth is taken down at the words, "and the veil of the temple was rent in two," when the Passion is once again read on Holy Wednesday. Fourthly and finally, there are authors who maintain that covering sacred images during Lent is based on the practice of public penance during the Medieval Ages wherein penitents were ritually expelled from the church during Lent. Since the practice of public penance is no longer in vogue, the entire congregation symbolically became the penitents and the altar symbolizing heaven, the dwelling place of God and the saints, is shielded from their view until they are reconciled to God on Easter. Which of these explanations do you think is more plausible? As for me, I agree with the observation of Msgr. Peter Elliott, author of the book *Celebrations of the Liturgical Year*, when he said, "The custom of veiling crosses and images... has much to commend in terms of religious psychology, because it helps us to concentrate on the great essentials of Christ's work of Redemption."

