

## Lenten Message from Father Jason Parish Priest and Shrine Rector

*Stabat Mater Dolorosa: At the Cross her station keeping.*

As we begin the holy season of Lent, it is fitting that, at this Shrine of Our Lady, we turn our affections towards Our Mother as she stands at the foot of the cross. The Lenten season is one of hope and new life as, through our Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we seek to recreate the new image that God has destined for us all. We hope to change our sinful ways, to pray more, to be more aware of the needs of others, and to atone for our sins.

In the Salve Regina, Our Blessed Lady is addressed as *our life, our sweetness and our hope*, and it is this hope which is celebrated on each Our Lady's Saturday through the year. Saturday can be seen as a link day; a bridge between Good Friday and Easter Sunday where the hope of Our Lady continually dwells. When the sun was darkened and the disciples had fled, the flame of faith was still alive in the pierced heart of Our Lady. This gave her the vision and the strength both to stand at the foot of the cross and to endure and see the light of the empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

Such hope of Our Lady is a light which shines in the darkness. It is a most befitting image for all the pilgrims who come to the shrine of Our Lady of the Taper and one to whom we can offer our burdens, shadows and problems. Our Lady, who is clothed in light and adorned with the sun, offers us the light of her Risen Son. We are encouraged, consoled and restored in our faith so that we are able to stand with our own cross and also bear the crosses of others .

In this Lenten season, let us ask Our Lady of the Taper to enlighten and direct us to the areas of our lives which need the healing and merciful presence of the Lord.

May the coming feast of Easter, the journey's end of our Lent, renew within us our baptismal promise to *walk in the light of the Lord*.