

We begin again our wonderful Lenten Season with the words of the prophet Joel ringing in our ears, "Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord your God." The prophet speaking on behalf of God invites us to set our hearts free!

To rid ourselves, not of our garments, but to rid ourselves of things that keep our hearts from being free. In other words, to be open to change ---- open to growing up, expanding our horizons.

440 of you have signed up, and participating in Small Groups that will study Rick Warren's book daily, and weekly with your group. What an enormously generous response on your part -- each of you seeking to grow in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

I encourage each of you to be open to the questions, the challenges, the invitations, which this material will bring up. It may even bring questions and issues that you have never addressed before in your life. Fear not any question -- just be open to where the Holy Spirit leads you in this relationship.

Let me tell you a story which I heard recently about a lady named Rosemary D'Arcy who went back to a small Rhode Island College to complete her bachelor's degree at age 87.

The students on campus were amazed by her "spunk" and she was highly admired and regarded. During the final semester, she was asked to speak at the football banquet.

Rosemary came up to the podium and she had little index cards that she was shuffling, and she dropped them all onto the floor. Once she got organized she said, "I'm sorry I gave up beer for Lent and the whiskey is killing me." What a great way to get back on your feet!

And then she went on to say this, "I will never get these cards back in order so just let me tell you what I know. We do not stop playing because we are old. We grow old because we stop playing. There's a huge difference between growing older and growing up.

"If you are 19 years old and lie in bed for one full year and don't do one productive thing, you will turn 20 years old. I am 87 years old and if I stay in bed for year and never do anything I will turn 88.

"Anybody can grow older — that doesn't take any talent or ability. The idea is to grow up by always finding the opportunity in change."

During these 40 Days, we are provided an extraordinary opportunity to change ---- "Rend your hearts, not your garments and return to the Lord your God."

Happy Lent!