**Lent Means Spring!**

**Minnesotans have had a brutally cold winter with record wind chills and snowfalls this year.  We’ve had 50 days of below zero weather right into March.  As I write this newsletter, I’m excited that we won’t be below zero tonight.  Have I become so numb to this cold that I think that I should rejoice when the temperature will not go below 3 degrees?  However, we aren’t the only ones who yearn for spring; the entire country is anxiously waiting for this persistent winter to disappear.**

**Lent begins on Wednesday and it is unusually late this year.  It comes from the Anglo word Lengthen and denotes the lengthening days as the sun rises in the sky and its rays begin to slowly melt the snow.  It literally means spring.  With the melting of the snowcap, we’ll be finding all sorts of debris and lost items that need to be examined, cleaned up or discarded.  There will be gardens to uncover to discover what plants have survived these cold months and we will be looking for tulips and daffodils, the first flowers to bloom by Easter. This could be a nice metaphor for Lent.**

**We are asked to examine our lives and clean up our act… a spiritual spring cleaning.  With the help of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we are given the opportunity to rid ourselves of any sinful debris and ask for forgiveness.  We are challenged to uncover our need for God in our lives and prepare ourselves for Easter.  During these forty days we have another chance to change, ask for mercy and start fresh.  Spring refreshes and renews the earth and Lent will do the same for us, too.**

**I am encouraging you to find Lenten practices that will inspire you to have a fruitful lent from your parish and by going to the Wisconsin Province Jesuits website.  They have some very creative ideas that include films, daily prayers and even cooking your way through Lent!**

**May you find renewed strength, happiness and peace in the forty days ahead.**

**Kathleen Groh**

**IVC Regional Director**