

Adults, catechumens, youth and children who have attended classes I've taught on the Eucharist in recent years have heard me tell this story.

A story about a little boy who was out in the backyard trying his hardest to move a big rock that was right in the middle of the yard.

He pushed, and shoved, and pulled and pushed some more not able to budge the rock a bit. All the while his father was observing his efforts from the kitchen window.

After watching the boy come close to exhaustion in his efforts, his dad went to him and asked his son if he was doing everything he could to move the rock.

Giving his father that look only children can when they are trying to figure out what planet their parents came from – he said, of course I'm doing everything I can.

And his father said – no you're not. Because you haven't asked me to help you yet. . .

Since the first Sunday of Lent, we were invited to place a rock in our pockets – or on our dining room table – in our sacred space – or as a real challenge – in our shoe – as a constant reminder of how solidly we can place our hope in values – other than those that come to us in the Gospel.

These rocks have been the symbol for our hearts made of stone – which need to become hearts of flesh – that can then be transformed more and more into the image and likeness of Christ.

We've carried our stony hearts for too long. We've been trying to move the rocks of our sins out of our lives long enough. It's now time to ask for God's help in changing our hearts and lives.

As we have sung in a song a couple of times during Lent: “Come, lay down your stones in the shade of the cross. Our God calls, ‘Come home now!’ ” to all who are lost.

And so as you come forward to venerate the cross, I ask that you lay a stone – either the one you picked up at the beginning of Lent – or one from the basket as you come forward. Lay down your stone at the foot of the cross – allowing the grace of the death and resurrection of Jesus – to set you free – and transform your life.